

MIDAS, NEVADA: MINING, MILLING, AND MEMORIES

Interviewee: Twelve people with firsthand memories of Midas, Nevada

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Description

Late in 1997, Andre J. Duchane, Vice President of Operations for Franco-Nevada Mining Corporation, along with Debra W. Struhsacker, environmental and government relations consultant for Midas Joint Venture (MJV), launched a project to record the mining and milling history of Midas, Nevada, through oral history interviews. (MJV is 100 percent owned by Franco-Nevada Mining Corporation, Inc.) Their interest was part of opening the Ken Snyder Mine near Midas. (The MJV's Ken Snyder Mine is located in Elko County, Nevada, approximately 60 miles northeast of Winnemucca and 1.5 miles southeast of Midas. It is an underground gold and silver mine, and commercial production from the mine began during the first quarter of 1999.)

MJV's sponsorship of the Midas oral histories was undertaken as part of the company's commitment to help preserve the history of Midas. Another MJV gift to the community was funding the restoration of the Midas schoolhouse in 1998 and donating the restored facility to the Friends of Midas.

For her book about Midas, *Forward With Enthusiasm: Midas, Nevada, 1907-1995*, author Dana Bennett had already conducted a number of interviews which she generously donated to this project. Using Dana's interviews as a base, the mining and milling oral histories were designed to include any and all miners from the 1930s to the 1980s. Chroniclers were sought who could remember and describe technology, production, ownership, and operations during those time periods. The hope was to add more chroniclers to those Dana interviewed. Following statewide publicity, no new sources of information were located, although many previously interviewed sources agreed to further interviews on specific topics.

The chroniclers in this research volume painted Midas with a golden brush. All described Midas as home, and their memories were clear, in that particular way people maintain clarity about a cherished time in their lives. All told of harsh winters and long distances to get help from neighboring towns. The Depression and World War II interfered with mining. Yet, in spite of these difficulties, the chroniclers held fast to fond memories of hard work, rich ore, people, parties, and a special feeling of belonging to one of Nevada's small mining communities.

Midas is accurately named, and the rich ore in its current Ken Snyder Mine has brought with it the opportunity to preserve Midas's past through schoolhouse renovation, support for Friends of Midas, and these oral histories.

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From oral history interviews conducted by
Dana Bennett and Victoria Ford
and edited by Victoria Ford

UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

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PREFACE

SINCE 1965 the University of Nevada Oral History Program (UNOHP) has been collecting eyewitness accounts of Nevada's remembered past. While there is no standard chronicler profile nor rigid approach to interviewing, each oral history plumbs human memory to gain a better understanding of the past. Following the precedent established by Allan Nevins at Columbia University in 1948 (and perpetuated since by academic programs such as ours throughout the English-speaking world) these manuscripts are called oral histories. Some confusion surrounds the meaning of the term. To the extent that these "oral" histories can be read, they are not oral, and while they are useful historical sources, they are not themselves history. Still, custom is a powerful force; historical and cultural records that originate in tape-recorded interviews are almost uniformly labeled "oral histories," and our program follows that usage.

Oral histories conducted by UNOHP are meant to serve the function of primary

source documents, as valuable in the process of historiography as the written records with which historians customarily work. However, while the properly conducted oral history is a reliable source, verifying the accuracy of all of the statements made in the course of an interview would require more time and money than the UNOHP's operating budget permits. The program can vouch that the statements were made by the chroniclers, but it does not assert that all statements are entirely free of error. As with all such efforts, the work should be approached with the same caution that the prudent reader exercises when consulting government records, newspaper accounts, diaries, and other sources of historical information.

In the following pages, the interviewers' questions have been set in italics to distinguish them from the words of the chroniclers and to make the text easier to read. Amusement or laughter is represented with [laughter] at the end of a sentence, while ellipses have been used in this text not to indicate that material has been deleted, but rather to indicate that a statement has been

interrupted or is incomplete . . . or there is a pause for dramatic effect. The 1998 tape recordings from which a portion of this manuscript is derived are in the archives of the University of Nevada Oral History Program, where they can be heard by appointment.

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INTRODUCTION

Late in 1997, Andre J. Duchane, Vice President of Operations for Franco-Nevada Mining Corporation, along with Debra W. Struhsacker, environmental and government relations consultant for Midas Joint Venture (MJV), launched a project to record the mining and milling history of Midas, Nevada, through oral history interviews. (MJV is 100 percent owned by Franco-Nevada Mining Corporation, Inc.) Their interest was part of opening the Ken Snyder Mine near Midas.

The MJV's Ken Snyder Mine is located in Elko County, Nevada, approximately 60 miles northeast of Winnemucca and 1.5 miles southeast of Midas. It is an underground gold and silver mine. Commercial production from the mine began during the first quarter of 1999 using a decline portal and ramp system to gain access to the ore, which is contained in steeply dipping gold and silver veins. Other components at the mine site include a mill facility, a cyanide destruction circuit, a tailings impoundment and embankment, a tailings underdrainage collection pond, a rapid infiltration basin, settling ponds, an administration building, maintenance facilities, and other ancillary

facilities. All of these facilities are located on private land. Prior to building the mine and milling facilities, MJV obtained numerous environmental permits and approvals from Nevada regulatory agencies. MJV designed the mine, mill, and ancillary facilities using proven and effective environmental protection and pollution prevention technology. The Ken Snyder Mine has a projected mine life of approximately twelve years.

MJV's sponsorship of this oral history volume was undertaken as part of the company's commitment to help preserve the history of Midas. Another MJV gift to the community was funding the restoration of the Midas schoolhouse in 1998 and donating the restored facility to the Friends of Midas.

For her book about Midas, *Forward With Enthusiasm*,¹ author Dana Bennett had already conducted a number of interviews which she generously donated to this project. Using Dana's interviews as a base, the mining and milling oral histories were designed to include any and all miners from the 1930s to the 1980s. We sought people

who could remember and describe technology, production, ownership, and operations during those time periods. We had hoped to add more chroniclers to those Dana interviewed. Following statewide publicity, no new sources of information were located, although many previously interviewed sources agreed to further interviews on specific topics.

The chroniclers in this research volume painted Midas with a golden brush. All described Midas as home, and their memories were clear, in that particular way people maintain clarity about a cherished time in their lives. All told of harsh winters and long distances to get help from neighboring towns. The Depression and World War II interfered with mining. Yet, in spite of these difficulties, the chroniclers held fast to fond memories of hard work, rich ore, people, parties, and a special feeling of belonging to one of Nevada's small mining communities.

The new oral history interviews were conducted during the summer of 1998. I eagerly looked forward to each trip to Midas, where the Bennetts, Byron and Mary Wilkerson, and Edna Timmons welcomed me into their homes, as did Jack and Noreen Murdock in

Winnemucca and Joe and Gaynell Keller in Fallon. Dana Bennett, who is both a resident and the author of the previously noted book on Midas, provided tours, contacts, and her valued endorsement of this project. Best of all, Midas is accurately named, and the rich ore in its current Ken Snyder Mine has brought with it the opportunity to preserve Midas's past through oral histories, school-house renovation, and support for Friends of Midas. MJV and Dana are to be highly commended for their vision. It is through the efforts of such corporations and individuals that Nevada's lively mining history is being preserved for future generations of scholars, researchers, and the public.

VICTORIA FORD
August 2001

Note

1. Dana Bennett, *Forward with Enthusiasm: Midas, Nevada, 1907-1995* (Reno: Great Basin Press, 1995).

 DAN BENNETT

DAN BENNETT began to visit Midas for hunting trips in 1967, and he and his wife, Joan, moved there permanently in 1992. Dan helped found The Friends of Midas, an organization dedicated to historic preservation projects in the community.



VICTORIA FORD: Today is August 19, 1998. My name is Victoria Ford. I'm here with Dan and Joan Bennett. We are at the Winnemucca Convention Center, kind of a halfway meeting point for us between Reno and Midas, and we're going to be talking to Dan today about his experiences living in Midas. Dan, let's start talking about when you first came to Midas and why.

DAN BENNETT: Well, I think it was about 1967, and I came to Midas with two brothers, Richard Bennett and David Bennett, and a friend of ours, Ron Wiggins, who was familiar with the area, to go deer hunting. It was a hunting trip. It may have been a year or so, or more than a year before we came back. Seems like we missed a year then came up in maybe 1969. But I think the

first year was 1967, because I was working with this Ron Wiggins at the time. Seems like that was the first year.

You were working with him where? And at what job?

At the Internal Revenue Service. We were both field agents there. I had just started; he had been there a few years.

Was this out of Reno? Is that where you lived at the time?

Yes.

So it was hunting that took you up into that area. What was your first impression of Midas?

The first trip I remember, I don't recall going into the town other than maybe one night. As I recall, those hunting trips in those days lasted maybe a week. But there was a bar there run by Andy Jones. We went in there, and I have no idea when we came out. We stayed outside of town, just up on the old road—what they called the old road.



Dan Bennett, 1998.

I don't recall paying much attention to the town. As we went up the canyon, there were still some ore carts sitting around at the old Miners Gold [mine]. Most of our time was spent out in the hills, hunting. I remember seeing a lot of junk cars sitting around.

Where Andy's bar was then is where the Midas Dinner House is now. We used to have to go there to get water. There was a spot next door that had like a free faucet there where hunters could get water. Other than that, I just did not pay a lot of attention to the town itself, the buildings and so on. There were several buildings there then that are not there now. There was a building right next to the bar where we got the water, and to our understanding, that was the original post office. Other than that, the buildings, I think, all appeared vacant. I don't remember seeing anybody else around

other than the Sabins. John and Evelyn Sabin had a place there then.

So, the Sabins and Andy Jones. There were not many people living there then, would you say?

No, that was about it.

Just three or four people, is that all?

A couple of years later when we were in there, Gordon Warren had moved back. Gordon Warren, I met at the Beck Corporation. I went to work for the Beck Corporation in 1963. They operated the keno and Pan games in Harolds Club, and Gordon Warren was a station boss (they called them) for the keno. I knew him there . . . had no idea he was in any way tied with Midas. At that time I didn't know Midas existed. But a couple of years after we'd come up here, he had moved back. He had retired, I guess. He and his wife, Ruby, at that time were living there.

You said it was maybe a couple of years before you came back? When did Midas start to make an impression on you?

Well, I think after a few years (I don't recall how many that is) of hunting, Joan and the kids Well, the first year—1969, 1970—that we came up, because we left one of the daughters at home, the youngest daughter And did we come up with Ron Wiggins? Was that the first trip? And we used it as a vacation spot, primarily, because we couldn't afford anywhere else. We used to tell the kids that they had their choice between that and Disneyland. Thank God they said Midas. But the first time in, there were just two kids with us, Dana and Lori, and it became a recreational spot without the hunting for us. After that I didn't do much hunting. I don't

recall that we did much of anything up there . . . did we, in Midas, ever, after that?

So then it became a family summer outing?

Very much so. It started off with a week or whatever we had for vacation at the time, and then it developed into an occasional holiday. Before we moved up there, and when we were just going up, still using it as a vacation spot, it was nearly every weekend. We would leave on Friday night, come back on Sunday, and that happened for . . . seven or eight years, anyway.

And that's quite a drive. From Reno? You're still talking about a drive from Reno up there?

Well, I had a job where if I It was a four-day-a-week thing, so I could take Friday. But we would spend Thursday night getting everything ready. As soon as the kids got home from school or whatever they were doing on Friday, then we'd be out of there and be up here by ten o'clock, probably, normally. And then, Sunday was a ritual of picking up the pieces and heading back to Reno.

And you camped. Tent camping or trailer camping?

Well, by that time when we were coming that often, where we live now was a trailer that we bought and moved in [to]. And prior to that we had a camping trailer that we'd set someplace there in the canyon. The first time up there with the family, I guess, we had a camping trailer, and the kids had a tent. That was part of the ritual for them on Friday night. They set up the tent, we set up the trailer part of it. Saturday was a free-for-all, and Sunday was pack up and come home.

So, what changed the tide and took you there permanently?

Well, in 1992 Joan had an opportunity to escape. They put out an early retirement program for power company employees, Sierra Pacific. And so, she was, I think, third in line to sign up for that. She was ready. Then I worked for about three more months, but the company I was with was changing the guard, and it was an opportunity for me to leave with something, and everything seemed to us to be pretty much in place—as far as the kids were out of school, the bills were paid, we were young enough to be crazy enough to try it, and so we did.

That was 1992, in July, when I quit where I was at. So, I guess, it's been six years. And, of course, the house was pretty much as it is now. Since, we've added on a garage. We've remodeled the kitchen. We've remodeled a lot, but the living quarters were bearable while we were there, so we had a place to go. It wasn't like we decided to get a tent and camp out.

You had a home. [laughter] Once you got there, I think it's kind of well known around town, and with everyone connected with Midas, that you've gotten interested in the history of Midas. Would you talk a little bit about how that evolved?

Well, I think I was always interested in history, anywhere I was, or anything I could get my hands on. But, probably, Dana's interest in the history of it—we watched her collect pictures and talk to people and collect stories. She had done a few oral histories with people that were out there, that she ran into, that had something to do with Midas. That probably got me interested, because I was so eager for her to put this into book form, that when she did, by that point, I think, it had exposed me to

enough things about the town that it was a matter of maybe following through. For instance, the cemetery. At the time she wrote the book, there was nothing there.

Nothing there, literally?

It was all grown over. I think there were three markers that were still out in the sagebrush. She had mentioned those that, through her research, she knew were there. Well, I contacted Howard Hickson with the Northeastern Nevada Museum in Elko about seeing if that museum would take any interest in doing something with the cemetery. He explained that they couldn't extend themselves out that far, manpower-wise or money-wise. And he suggested that we form our own little, tax-exempt, nonprofit group and do something with it. We didn't act on that right away. After Joan and I moved up there, we got acquainted with a gal from BLM [Bureau of Land Management], who was coming in to kind of keep an eye on the mining activity that had started up in 1992. And in talking to her, she said that the BLM was interested in doing cemeteries or projects like that. So she researched the ownership of it, and it turns out it was on private land, so she said they couldn't do anything. But then she kind of gave me some ideas as to how to get started and who to talk to and where to get materials and so on. The first thing was to fence it off, even though we didn't know whose it was.

Even though it was on private land, but you didn't know who owned it?

Yes. At that point, if she knew she didn't say, and we didn't know. She suggested I get a hold of Newmont out at Ivanhoe [mine], because they'd just taken in a bunch of fencing from around an archaeological site. I talked to a guy named Ed Lopez, who was the manager of that mine out there. And he said the same thing that others were going to

tell me—that they had to have some assurance they were doing this for a nonprofit group, a community or something, before they could release materials.

So, we got this Friends of Midas group underway. It was pretty much a carbon copy of the articles from Friends of Rhyolite. Gene Laucirica, the accountant here in Winnemucca, and John Doyle, the attorney, took it from there, and they put together whatever accountants and attorneys do. So we had that up and running, and we were legal and recognized by the IRS as a 501(c)3-type organization. And so then it was a matter of contacting For instance, the Honor Camp¹ said that they would clean it up, since it was going to be a public-type project.

Bob Unger has always been very interested in the history of Midas. In talking with him, we were trying to figure out whose land it was on and finally determined that it belonged to Barrick Goldstrike, and Barrick Goldstrike had just gotten it from a big purchase they'd made from the Ellison Ranching Company. Ellison had these little pieces of land, quarter-sections and half-sections and so on sticking around, and one of them happened to be where the cemetery was. So we contacted Lee Chapman at Barrick Goldstrike, and he was very eager to see that the property got set up so that we could do something with that cemetery. He [was] at that time, and still is, a county commissioner. Talked with George Boucher, and since Friends of Midas was an unknown quantity at that point, they decided to deed it over to the county and then have the county give us permission to do whatever we wanted to do on it as far as restoring the cemetery. So they put that in place, and we contacted people around the area and businesses for donations to build the picket fence.

Edna Timmons was our sole source. She was the only one we could find who had any recollection of that fence. We found pieces

of fence around the cemetery area and around the town. She seemed to think we had found the real thing, or pieces of the real thing. So the picket fence, as you see it up there now, was as close as we could come to the original, based on her memory.

Her description of where it was located and what it looked like?

We got a fairly good idea of where it was originally, because there are places up there where, evidently, they had corner posts with rocks around them, and those are still there. What we've . . . partly out of necessity, probably mostly because of not doing enough research or not knowing, the cemetery area (as you see it now) probably takes in all of the old one—all of the original and then some, because it appears that we may be a little further to the east than what it was originally. And we have included all of the areas . . . I mean, all of those post markers. We're out a few feet in every direction from that, so . . . And it lays (or lies, whichever you think it should be) maybe a little askew from what the original did. We did that to pick up our original idea of how the markers lay. We tried to be parallel with what we thought were the markers up there.

What you're describing to me is that Dana got interested first in the history of Midas and was working on a book, and you were watching that and getting enthused at the same time. And then the cemetery project seemed to be the first one that kind of presented itself?

Well, the school, I think, has always been in the back of our heads, even when it was still privately owned. The schoolhouse closed, I think, in about 1962 or 1963, and the county sold it off in about 1967 or somewhere in there, 1968, to a group of people from Reno, and they used it as a

hunting lodge, a place to stay when they were up there. It's probably the most recognizable Midas thing that is still around.

The cemetery—very few people even knew the cemetery was there. The schoolhouse, I think it was of interest because it was so prominent. Of course, while it was privately owned, we hadn't given it a lot of thought, except right towards the end of that ownership by those people the word was out that they wanted to get it painted and fixed up and so on. I had talked with one of the guys about helping with it and trying to line up some people with him, and I told him outright that I was very interested in seeing it kept original.

Then, I'm not sure what happened within their own group, but the decision was made to sell it. It was put up for sale four years ago, I suppose, now . . . five years ago. And so we contacted the ones we knew who were in the group, and it was pretty evident that it was going to be sold to Midas Joint Venture. But anyway, to get back to your original question, the school was probably of more interest to us than anything else.

Even more than the cemetery?

It was one of those things we just couldn't do anything about. As long as it was private ownership, there was nothing we could do about it.

But the cemetery, it looked like you could do something about that.

The cemetery, and maybe you'd have to have seen what it looked like then to appreciate how anybody could get interested in it. But I think it was the fact that you knew there were more burials there than the markers that were there. And then, as we got to poking around, there used to be an old kind of a hog wire and barbed wire fence combination that went along one side of it. You realized that someone had tried to set

this thing apart and wondering, “Why’d they do that?” We came across the fact that it burned a couple of times—seriously burned in 1942, I believe it was, when the mill burned. But prior to that, there’d been a fire and destroyed what was mostly wood markers in there, and wood fence, of course. We found pieces of the wood posts and fencing, and, I suppose, that got the curiosity going. Then in talking with people like Edna Timmons, it was one of those things that probably just had to be done . . . keep me out of trouble.

[laughter] OK. So those were the two that really became the focus for the Friends of Midas group?

Ah, there was one other. There’s an old jailhouse sitting up there, and I may have contacted the owner of that prior to the actual formation of Friends of Midas. And he expressed some interest in letting us have it . . . putting it someplace. And then, during the course of that conversation, he indicated that maybe we could work out something on the land. It just sits on one single lot right in the center of town. In talking with him further, he was leaning toward more than we could handle at the time. He wanted to make a trade for a more desirable lot somewhere else, and I brushed it off. By that point, we were moving along with the cemetery, and I put it on a shelf just with him, saying that we’ve got something else that’s going to take up our time at this point, so we can’t dillydally around with trying to work this out. The jailhouse has deteriorated to a point where it can probably no longer be moved. It would still be nice to get a replica of it up. It’d be nice if it could be right where it is, just so we could say it was in the original spot, but I don’t think that’s going to happen. I don’t think we’re going to get *that* particular building. We may put a replica somewhere else, someday, but the jail was an interest early

on and was something we *would* have done something about if the guy might have been a little more realistic of what our funds were and what we had to work with. We couldn’t do what he wanted to do at that point.

OK. You are talking about funds, and as a nonprofit, tell me a little bit about how the Friends of Midas evolved. You got people to put together the paperwork for it. What did you use for funds? And what did you do for membership?

Well, my wife and her checkbook. *[laughter]* Well, probably, I think we were used to that approach. That’s, I should say “bad,” because as Dana was collecting pictures and documents and things like that, we paid for the reproduction. To that extent, [we] had our start on a historical society.

So, Friends of Midas really started with Dan and Joan Bennett, right?

Yes. In fact, our kids are very quick to point out it probably should be called *Friend* of Midas.

[laughter] As in singular, huh?

But years ago, way back when we first were going up to Midas in the early 1970s, there was still a town hall up there, and Bob Unger (who I mentioned before there), he and Ida, his wife, owned the bar at that time. They set a jar out on the bar. The idea was that someday, if we collected all of our nickels and dimes, we’d be able to restore that town hall. Well, when they sold the bar, it lost a little interest, but Bob did take the two or three hundred dollars that had been collected and put it in an account. And then, when we’d have a Fourth of July “doin’s” (as the Clampers like to say), we would get donations, and people would pay for hot dogs and things like that. That went into

that fund, and, I think, at the time Friends of Midas started there was probably \$800, maybe, in that account. So the legal . . . or the filing fees and so on for Friends of Midas came out of that account. As I recall, it was around \$200. Since then, we've added a little to that. We may have added some to it from a Fourth of July event, but once we got the cemetery started, we realized we had to get brave about asking for money, so we did. With that first and only *The Midas Chronicle*, we sent out a note with that saying we need money, and we got a pretty good response.

The Midas Chronicle is a newsletter?

Well, it was a newspaper put together from articles that . . . Dana put it together—articles that had appeared in old newspapers, including the Midas newspapers. We laid it out as best we could to make it look like an old newspaper, just to bring to the attention of everybody on our list that Friends of Midas was up and running, and here's what we were going to do.

So, the one and only publication looked like a replica of an old newspaper [and was] published there in Midas?

Yes. We've had a couple of newsletters that we've put out, and we're going to be doing that again. We plan to do a *Midas Chronicle* and a newsletter early in the spring, but we got involved in . . . Well, the schoolhouse—it was announced that was going to be turned over to us. The Ducks Unlimited thing came along. We thought that was newsworthy. So here we sit.

And when you say, "Ducks Unlimited thing," would you just briefly tell what that was?

The event we've just had. They've had them in Midas for the last six or eight years,

usually put together by one of the bar owners. Always put together by one of the bar owners. This last year, the guy who did it the past year said he would be unable to do that. So Friends of Midas thought, if we could round up all of the food and beverage, in the way of donation and so on, we could make a few bucks for Friends of Midas. All those things happened: we got donations; we got people who donated a lot of time and effort; and we put together this Ducks Unlimited auction and raffle event in Midas, and then Friends of Midas got the proceeds of the bar and the food, one raffle, one auction. And we came out with the most money we've raised to date.

Which is an estimated . . . ?

Well, we went over \$8,000 . . . total \$8,200, I think, \$8,300. By the time we pay some of the bills that we've had and buy some things that we want to buy—tables and chairs for the schoolhouse, for one thing—we should have netted about \$6,000.

So you've come a long ways just in the few years since that was established as a nonprofit.

Well, I was trying to think . . . With the cemetery, it seems to me that total bill—when the last picket is up, as far as the fence—will be about \$5,500. We've paid for all those things, but that was all received through donations. So I guess you could say at this point, in four years we've raised \$14,000 or so. And now we're sitting on all this money, and we don't know what to do with it.

[laughter] I'll bet you have some plans. Do you?

[laughter] Well, going into the schoolhouse, we want to be braced to be up and running when we do take over there,

because there'll be things that we're responsible for—the insurance and things like that—that have to happen.

OK, let's go back and trace each one of these. Now, the jail, you've talked about that. Right now, that's a project that's on the shelf, and probably the original can't be saved unless something changes in the negotiation. The town hall, the school, and the cemetery are the three projects then, is that correct?

Well, there's one more.

Oh, there's a fifth project?

I didn't think you would ask, but now that you did, about two years ago . . . Well, I guess, we were kind of finishing up with getting things put together with the county on that cemetery property. There are some lots on Main Street that, according to the county, they were not going to let anybody build on, because there's runoff water through there, and there could be a spring in that area. So we approached the county and asked them if they would set aside those lots for us to display our old things. At that point we were thinking in terms of mining equipment or wagons—not only mining, but agricultural type things. The county did. They were holding those lots in their trustee inventory for nonpayment of taxes. They have now moved them over to [where] they're owned by the county and cannot be sold, at least at this point.

So we had John Priestler, who was Dana's husband at the time and a landscape architect and interested in Midas . . . he put together a concept of what he thought ought to be on those lots. It amounts to a replica of a mining site with a headframe, blacksmith shop and a tool shop, and all the junk that would be laying around an abandoned mine site—a visual-type display where people could get up close enough to see what it was

all about but hopefully not close enough to get hurt on. And he presented that at the July 4th town meeting. At this point, the Friends of Midas Board has not formally approved the idea and decided to go ahead with it. We did have a sizeable donation. One of the bar owners there stepped up and said they'd give us a couple thousand dollars to get this thing going. And that was Matsons, Les and Beverly Matson. And so, we've earmarked that for the development of this project if, indeed, it turns out we're going to go ahead with it. So that is, I think, about the end of the projects as I know them today.

OK. Let's go back and kind of trace the progress of each one of those then. Let's start with the cemetery, because I think you told quite a bit about that. You've got the fences going up. Tell me where that is from the first days when it was just sagebrush and a few markers out there.

Well, this summer we're finishing up the picket fence. The picket fence is about 80 feet wide and about 220 feet long, a rectangle with a front entrance where Edna said it was, the south end. That fencing, *that* project, should be finished this year. We got about half of it last year, and we're working on the upper north half of it this year. There's still a barbed-wire fence around it, and that will stay there. We left an area for a fire break, roadway, maintenance road. Then after that's put together, I'd like to go in and do maybe three or four individual plot fences—decorative-type fences.

Have you been able to identify where each of the graves are located?

Well, pretty much so. If the number of burials that we think happened there are in fact there, we think there are about thirty-five to forty sites.

So part of what you've been doing is researching the burials that have actually been there, because that's not information that's readily available?

We have gone . . . I don't know at what point we started that, except that we were making trips over to the county, to Elko, for whatever reason, and we took the opportunity (Joan and I did) to go in and . . . Joan spent, what? One whole day going through death records in there to see if, on the death records, it would say where they were buried. And we found several. I'll say we found six at that time that were not mentioned in Dana's book, plus confirmed the ones that were. Then one thing led to another. There was a gal in Elko (I can't remember her name at this point), she was doing some research, and she came across one that was not in the book, and one we had not found, and she called us and told us about it. So we've since confirmed that one. When I say "confirmed," we either have a death certificate, [or] we have something tangible to put our hands on to say "that person is there"—newspaper article, whatever.

Then there's a gal by the name of Judy Mawhorter here in Winnemucca, and she's come up with two or three more individuals just through her research on newspaper articles. And we think we're up to about twenty-three at this point.

And you think there's about thirty-five all together?

If these indentations as we see them are all burial sites, there should be about that many. The difficulty in, I suppose, any of these mining towns is, are they all inside the fence? Or were they inside the fence, even then? There's some we strongly suspect were buried in somebody's back yard. If it says they were buried in Midas, we're assuming they're in that cemetery which

may not be a good assumption. But with that assumption we have twenty-three.

Are you learning the stories of who these people were and what their connection to Midas was as you get the death certificates or the newspaper articles? Are their stories coming to light, too?

That's really the most interesting part of it, I think, because we've come across some dillies. The newspaper articles that you find from that era—I'm talking 1908 to 1932—were so much more descriptive. They seem to be a little freer with their explanations. One woman moved over from National, [Nevada,] and she'd run a boarding house in National. She hadn't been in Midas but a couple of days, and she drank hair tonic. They don't know if she did it purposely or by accident, but she died almost immediately, and she's buried there.

One guy was driving a wagon . . . that was down by the Meyers Ranch, and they found him. He evidently had fallen off of the wagon—at least he was crushed by the wagon and was still laying there in the road. His dog was laying there beside him.

The doctor that was in Midas, Dr. Dunscombe, who delivered a lot of babies and handled some funerals himself or burials, he was quite elderly when he died, I think, in his nineties, and he was a cocaine . . . freak? Is that what they say about cocaine? He's the one who supposedly walked all the way to Tuscarora to get a fix one time.

Was that in the newspaper? Is that how you found that?

Edna Timmons, I believe, is who said that was the story about him. Dr. Dunscombe is Desda Warren Wood's great-uncle. I mentioned that to her once, and she said, "It wouldn't surprise me." I think he was . . . He had the reputation. He was

more interested, probably, in the mining than he was in being a physician. Also, he and Mabel Young were the ones who were promoting the town of Dunscombe, right out there.

But as far as in the cemetery, another lady . . . a family who had moved here from Goldfield (I think they got here in about 1907 or 1908), she was having problems. According to the husband, [she] committed suicide by cutting her own throat. And her husband married not too long after that—for whatever that implies.

Some question of who cut whose throat? Is that what you're saying?

Let me add something there. [tape turned off and on]

We wanted to come back to that story about the suicide, and you mentioned your source of information for that.

Well, it was a newspaper article that . . . a couple different newspapers that explained that there was an inquest—an inquiry held about it—and I guess you're free to draw your own conclusions.

But there were no charges at that time?

There were no charges filed.

But this is one of the stories, [an example of] the sort of questions left unanswered.

The kind of thing that unfolds when you're looking to identify who's buried there, and you start stepping into these areas, and I've never been reluctant to hold back: I'm as curious as anybody else. For me that adds the real interest to this whole . . .

Yes, you've certainly come across some amazing stories about people there.

As far as others, let's see. There was a guy named Rene . . . I'll have to stop and think about that for a minute. What was his last name? A Frenchman. In 1915, he had designed and built a replica of a mining site and had it on display at the exposition, the World's Fair in San Francisco. Must have gained some fame or notoriety through that, because it was noted in the newspaper when he died. That was 1915 [when he built that]. In 1916, he moved to Midas, and he worked and lived there, died there, and is buried there. Probably, one of those interesting situations . . . as far as, you would wonder why he was there. Why Midas? If it was his interest in mining . . . because his years there spanned some of the years that were no production, nothing. [He] evidently lived alone, according to the article, and I sure wish I could remember his last name. I will in a minute.

Sounds to me like you uncover information, but you also uncover even more mysteries as you go along, I mean, questions that just can't be answered.

On that one I talked with a couple of people at the [Nevada] Historical Society in Reno, and they're planning on helping us out with that, to see if they can find anything about his display and the thing that he put together for the World's Fair. But I think that one kind of fascinates me, that a guy who . . . By 1919 the Elko Prince was shut down, so what was he doing there those years? And he wasn't *real* old when he died. I think he was in his forties, and that was 1932 when he died, so he was fairly young when he moved over there.

Interesting. Well, that kind of brings us up-to-date on the cemetery, unless there's anything more that you can think of that you want to add on that project. That's just going to go forward? You're going to

continue to identify the grave sites and restore it?

It's probably going to be just an open-end book, because I think it could be interesting to track these. Even the ones we already have a start on, I think things will pop up about them that someone will come by and say, "Hey, did you know . . . ?"

Yes, you're not finished yet. Let's go to the schoolhouse, then. You mentioned that when you moved there, the schoolhouse was owned and used as a lodge, a privately owned hunting lodge?

Yes. There were nine men, families (I guess they're all out of Reno, they were at that time), who had been coming up there in that area, hunting and fishing before, and they decided to buy the schoolhouse. Like I said, I think that was 1969, somewhere in there, that they actually bought it, took it over, and it was used by probably two of the families, or two of the men, mostly. If I understand right, as a group, it became difficult for some of the ones to justify kicking in on the expenses, and it was getting there at the end to where it had to have a new roof, it had to be painted. It was down to where a lot of things would have to be done to it, and I think they just had some in their group who *didn't* want to go forward with it, so they decided as a group to sell it.

And you said it was clear that they were going to sell it to Midas Joint Venture? Did you approach them as Friends of Midas to try to purchase it?

Yes. We had talked with one of the owners prior to that, and he said if they ever decided to sell it they'd let us know. Well, they did, through the newspaper like they let everybody else know. I'm not questioning their business decision. I mean, they had to go after the highest bidder. But we

immediately jumped on it, after we saw it in the paper, and started contacting the owners, and they had put it in the hands of *one* of the owners, to be responsible for selling it and so on. We talked with him, and they had set up some guidelines to make bids, and at that point I think they had a bid for \$27,000. We wanted to bid on it, and we were ready to go into the thirties with it.

We had contacted some people around and said, "If this comes together, will you back us on this, so we can get this?" And they had put it in multiples of \$5,000, so the next bid would have been \$32,000.

Well, during the conversation with this one person who was handling the sale, he said some things that rang a bell, and I thought, "Well, that's got to be the guy we know at Midas Joint Venture," so we called him. He said, yes, they intended to get it. We said the town was very much interested in getting their hands on that schoolhouse and had been for years. And he said, "All right, what if when we're done with it, you guys take it?"

And who was this at Midas Joint Venture?

Craig Haas. And he, at first, intimidated they . . . when they were done, they would sell it to us for what they had in it. But I think they saw our interest, and I think they saw their opportunity to do something for the town, so they immediately said that they'd be remodeling it, and they talked with us about certain aspects of it, just to see if we were happy with what they were doing. We were free to come and go and comment and so on, on it. I think they took us seriously. When all was said and done . . . Well, even prior to that, they said, "We'll hand it over to you when it's over," when they're done with it.

Meaning the ownership of it?

Yes.

So they're going to just deed it to the Friends of Midas?

And so, I guess, they finished up a year ago? Or two summers ago? Last summer they finished it, and they moved in their geo-tech people, which do core samples and so on, prior to them building another place up the hill, which they've done. Those people have moved out, but they're still keeping some geologists there doing some work. And they told us early this year, they said, at the end of the drilling season, which probably means the end of October, they would hand us over the school.

Well, once we were faced with the reality that it was going to happen, then we got nervous about it happening, because we didn't want to get into something here that we couldn't keep up, and I don't think they did either. So, one of our board members, Mert Mickelson, has taken it upon himself to put together a plan as to how we're going to raise money and how we're going to maintain that building, what we're going to use it for, and how it's going to be used and so on, so that come October 15, when they say now is the date that they're going to have their ceremony to transfer ownership, we're up and running and we're ready to go.

Take on, as you were saying, the insurance and the overhead of keeping it operating.

It's kind of like, I suppose, when you send one of your kids off to school. You're kind of daring them to raise their own money, but you know that you'll probably have to step in to help them, and they've assured us that they're going to step in and help.

To make it possible.

Very possible. They're going overboard to make sure that this works for us.

What's the main use of the building going to be, once it's owned by Friends of Midas?

We're going to have just a wild, week-long drunk. [laughter]

I'll bet that's not true! Not if you're in charge of the overhead. [laughter]

Well, for community meetings for one. We have a water co-op, which holds a meeting once a year. We now have Friends of Midas, which holds a meeting, and there are just those times when people, even in little communities, need to get together and talk things over. We envision that will be part of the use. We'd like to see part of it (and I guess I'm speaking in terms of two rooms available) . . . one of the rooms will be dedicated to a museum-type setting. There'll be photographs and documents and things that are from Midas; and the other side, we hope it will be open to use by people who have a legitimate reason to be using something like that. If Ducks Unlimited wanted to have a spot, or if some other town function [needed it], we want to have it available and use it for that purpose.

So it's kind of going to be the museum and the town hall, which leads me to ask you about what happened to the town hall, because we mentioned that as one of the things that Friends of Midas had their eye on restoring or reclaiming.

Well, the town hall was built in (Dana argues with me on this, but I know I'm right) 1928, I think, it was finished. It was torn down about, oh, I suppose 1988, ten years ago.

It was torn down?

It became dilapidated. They'd kept it boarded up ("they," just people who lived

there in town kept it boarded up) so you couldn't get in there easily. And the piers underneath were cement piers. They were deteriorating, and it was time for something to be done with it. At that time there was a guy living up there by the name of Ron Hasson, who was very active with the Division of Forestry, in that he was kind of the local fire person. He got the county to remove that building. It's on county property. And they put up the fire station. I always hate to see things like that go, but under the circumstances, it probably had to happen, primarily because no one could take care of it or would take care of it.

There just were not enough resources, even by Friends of Midas, to keep it or restore it?

Well, Friends of Midas didn't exist at that time.

Oh, in 1988, that's right.

We'd started that fund, but the three hundred to four hundred dollars we had in it wouldn't . . .

Wouldn't save it. So it was torn town, actually before Friends of Midas really got going.

There was really just nobody there to push it.

When you've been doing work on the school, have there been stories that have been coming up about the school, too?

Oh, the school restoration was done entirely by Midas Joint Venture. They contracted all that out, and our only involvement during this time is just walking in and being pleasantly surprised at what they were doing. Stories from the school-house? Probably . . .

Maybe mostly what Dana has gathered in her book?

I think, yes. And Edna, I think I mentioned to you, she was the first graduate, but she . . .

◇

We were talking about Edna Timmons graduating from the Midas School. Let's go back [to that.] You said she was the first graduate?

She and another girl were the first to graduate from the new school, which is this one. I thought that took place in 1928. Just the other day she said that Governor [Frederick B.] Balzar was there and handed them their diplomas. It's one of those things we need to take a look at, because he was up there to witness the first gold brick being poured. I think that was from the Getchell operation. I thought that took place in about 1931, but Edna was there. I just need to find out from her if she was talking about 1928 or 1931. If she went through the school and graduated in 1931, I know Balzar was up there that year, because he was up there with Dempsey [boxing champion Jack Dempsey], and he was up there with Getchell and so on, sage-hen hunting. So it's one of those things we need to take a look at. But she was one of the two first graduates. The other gal has died. The other gal was a Phillips? Was that the last name?

JOAN BENNETT: I believe so.

And her sister, Phillips' sister, is still alive—lives in Elko. But the girl that Edna graduated with has died. So they're planning on having Edna at this ceremony, because she is the first graduate of the new school.

[The ceremony] on October 15. And you were saying, also, it's significant that Governor Balzar was there when she graduated, because . . . ?

Well, they *think* they've got Governor Miller lined up to be here for this ceremonial dance they're doing.

[The ownership] transition that's going to happen?

Yes.

It's pretty exciting for the community, I would think.

It takes a lot to get us excited up there.

Does it? [laughter]

I think it is nice that they're getting some interest in that schoolhouse and the community, because, like I said before, I think a lot of those things were just gone and would have been forgotten. And thank goodness, in the case of the schoolhouse, Midas Joint Venture showed up when they did, because I think we have a company there that's genuinely interested in making a good impression on the people in and around Midas.

The school could have gone the way of the town hall, had not Midas Joint Venture come along, correct?

Well, even if it would have been . . . had they had sold that to a private individual or Friends of Midas, we could never have come close to doing what they've done with that. They poured a *lot* of money into that thing, and they did it up right. They went back in and insulated it, rewired it, plumbing—everything was done up right. Yet the school is still the way it was when it was built.

Authentic? Other than it's got the insulation and electricity?

I think you historians like to say they didn't mess with the integrity. [laughter]

Yes. That sounds good. In your digging for stories and historical information about Midas, as you've been working on these projects, what have you learned about mining and milling in Midas? Let's start back. Are there any stories, or do you have a sense of what was going on in the 1930s and 1940s and 1950s before you arrived there in Midas? Any stories that are surviving from those eras?

Well, probably because of my lack of knowledge of mining, I don't get off on that as often as I probably should. But By [Byron] Wilkerson, of course, is a favorite source for everybody. He can tell you stories about the guys who fell in the cyanide pit, and those [stories] that probably you've covered with him.

Right, he's an excellent source of information.

I think there were things happening up there later on that I didn't really realize the significance of in the 1980s. There were several companies in there exploring, and I think we kind of laughed it off like, "Why would you mess with this?"

Well, at that point they really hadn't gotten a real grip on this microprocessing. Much more recently, in the 1990s, 1992, when Ken Snyder and a couple other geologists were in there poking around, I think . . . everybody there has always heard that there's gold there, thinking in terms of gold mining as they'd do it in the old days. If they could get the water out of the Elko Prince and this and that, you know, there was gold there to be had. But these guys were looking for gold in a different way, looking for something that I don't think anybody was really familiar with. They can find a few little pieces someplace and make it profitable, whereas before that was just evidently unheard of. So I think *most*

recently that microprocessing has just changed the whole thing as far as mining.

As far as prior to that, I don't really think I was paying attention to It fascinated me when we got up there, that the ore carts were sitting there on the rails at the Miners Gold, and you'd see things laying around, pieces of equipment. But I couldn't have told you which end you push on an ore cart. It fascinated me that it was old, and it was rusty, so I wanted it.

A relic. And, in fact, you have some of the things, is that correct?

We've collected some things over the years that people had up there, people used in the area. And hopefully, those will all end up in the mining display.

You said in the 1980s there were companies out there exploring. Were you aware of any prospecting going on in those years when you were up there for camping weekends and so on?

Individuals. There were people who came in there from It seemed to me for some reason we had several people coming from Utah. There was a company called Hiko-Bell that played around with the Miners Gold for a while—owned it at one time. There was a guy named Sorbe, who may still be alive, who had some claims around there, but I was always under the impression that these people were in there doing assessment work just to keep their claims open, and do whatever they had to do, and then they left, because they weren't there over maybe a week or two. When I'm talking about companies in there Back in the 1980s, I think it was, when exploration was a big tax gimmick. Big companies—Texaco, which eventually bought out the Getchell Mine, I think—they were up there in the canyon, poking around but nothing like you see now, not the drill

rigs where they're going down for the samples at phenomenal depths. There were guys just walking around, picking up samples, and carrying them out. Like I say, I think this microprocessing just changed everything.

Changed it just since you've been going up there. I know I'm talking to Jack [Murdock] and to Byron, and both of them always want to tell me how deep the Ken Snyder Mine is now, because it just boggles their minds that they are down so deep. They are over a mile down in the ground, and they can't even imagine how that could be, with the technology that they were accustomed to in the 1930s and 1940s.

Well, By. . . did he tell you the Herbert Hoover story?

I'm not sure. You tell me what you know about the Herbert Hoover story.

The thing that fascinates me about that is it was Herbert Hoover. It could have been another mining engineer, we could have cared less. But this was in the 1920s. Getchell had Herbert Hoover, whom he had met years before with his Wingfield connections. Herbert Hoover came up there with the idea of looking at the Elko Prince to see why they couldn't break through and they couldn't get the water out of there, or whatever. But he was there to look at the Elko Prince, specifically. At the time, he was working at the copper mine up by Mountain Home. When you're asking for mining stories, now that fascinates me simply because it was Herbert Hoover. Who would have ever guessed that

He was here?

He was a Stanford graduate, engineer, and I guess an outstanding engineer. But just out of the sake of friendship, he did this

favor for Getchell. He came up there and poked around to see what he could find. Those kind of mining stories are interesting to me because of the people involved, not so much what they were doing.

Yes, historical figures. That's not one that I recall, but that doesn't mean I haven't heard it before.

Dempsey—a lot of stories about how he was working his mine and all that. He was up there because Getchell was a promoter, as much as he was an engineer, and he knew that attaching himself to a famous name like that, getting him involved They don't tell that one of the owners in that was also one of the two gangsters out of Reno—McKay, or those two guys that were the local hoodlums in Reno in the 1930s. They were also one of the owners. Getchell, I think, was pretty quick to grab whoever had the bucks or the fame to promote his mines. And so, there again, the Dempsey Mine, which is now being looked into by Midas Joint Venture, is interesting to me only because it was Dempsey.

Yes, and all these connections with these well-known names, Getchell had [these connections]. He was able to call in those kinds of favors.

Wingfield, of course, had owned property at one time in Midas, but he and Getchell were thick. They had money connections from back East to help them promote these mines, but still, for Getchell . . . it turned out to be a losing proposition, and the thing ended up in bankruptcy. It was called the Gold and Silver Mining Company. At the last turn there, all ended up with the Battle Mountain Mortgage Company. And those lots in town, anyway, were all sold off to a couple that had property there in Midas—have a lot of property there in Midas now. And they

bought them and have tried to sell them off. So I really draw kind of a blank other than stories about the people who were involved in mining.

About the people, more so than the actual mining operations or technology.

For me to talk intelligently about a drift or an ore cart

OK. You've really seen, though, something that's been interesting—how Midas went from mining to recreation, and it appears to me that this whole area around Midas is some combination of mining and recreation now. Is that what you have seen happen in that area? You went there hunting deer, for example, as a start, rather than [having] any connection with mining at all.

Probably another thing I didn't realize at the time was that when Gordon Warren retired and moved back out there I suppose he was in his forties then, wasn't he, or fifties?

JOAN BENNETT: Fifties.

And Andy Jones and Jim Wilkings, who later became Andy's partner, those guys were still mining. And even though we saw them and knew they were over the hill someplace once in a while, I don't think it really phased me. You know, "Why would anybody spend their time?" I just had in my head, I guess, it was a futile effort. It was over with, and these guys were hanging around trying to make something work.

Really?

Well, it never would. In fact, I think any of these people who have since sold out their mining claims to Midas Joint Venture or the others will tell you that that's the only

chance they ever had of getting any money out of those mines. The original mine, the Bamberger Mine, which was owned by Joe Keller, he specifically said he would never And he mined that. Well, you talked with him. He worked at that thing well into the years when And he may have come out with a jar full of something. But as far as any money to speak of, they had to sell to this mining group to see anything out of it. And there were several of those people who almost told that story apologetically, like, "We're selling out." Well

Almost as though they'd given up on some dream?

Or they'd given up on Midas, I think. Edna Timmons and Mary Wilkerson had an interest in a mine that they sold. Evelyn Sabin, Murdock—those people have all sold their claims or leased them out to Midas Joint Venture. And I think maybe before it was kind of some unwritten brotherhood thing up there that said, "Well, no one comes to Midas except us old people, the old guard," and so on, "and we'll never give up." They're giving up, and probably if Midas Joint Venture found gold in our front yard, you'd probably see me at their office signing the papers.

And you would give up, too, huh?

Well, I think there comes a time, and probably what happened to those people, when that was the only thing they were ever going to see out of this promise or this thing they had had all these years—something good might happen. Well, then it finally happened in some form or another or in some measurable amount, and why not do it?

I like how you're stating that, because that kind of explains their intense interest, almost like they have a part in what's

happening at Midas Joint Venture. They're all just watching and paying such close attention to what's going on up there

Well, they all know there's gold there. They'll tell you that, any one of them you talk to. They'll say, "Well, I *know* there's gold in that place over there, but we just couldn't quite get there." Well, maybe this puts them there, and like I say, now they're living their dream over.

Yes, they're seeing it happen in their lifetime. Interesting.

As far as Midas Joint Venture, that mining operation being there, I guess, like anybody else, when we first realized it was going to happen, we went through a period of denial. And then, secondly, for the people who went up there like we did, for recreation or solitude or retirement or whatever reason, I don't think we wanted it to happen, because we envisioned this big pit that would surround the town and probably the buildings would be removed and replaced by all the modern things, and so on.

Well, you hear stories like Candelaria, you know, where they mined all around the cemetery, and now it's sitting up on this I don't think that's going to happen up here. And I think Midas Joint Venture, you can't give them *all* the credit, because their load is located over the hill, but they've located themselves over the hill, out of sight. As far as that particular area, we probably all had our times when it was recreation to us—deer hunting, arrowhead hunting, or whatever. Several times this year we've gone out to do the things we like to do, and ten minutes down the road you don't know that the thing's any different than it ever was. Doesn't mean there won't be others coming in, and someday there might be that big pit where the Ellison Ranch is. Who knows? But for us, I am not disappointed in the way this has turned out.

If there had to be a mine, I'm glad it was them. If there had to be people involved in direct contact with the community, I'm glad it was the group that ended up being involved with us, because those people, I think, have shown a genuine interest in keeping Midas . . . leaving Midas alone.

Letting it exist, and even going a little step further than that—preserving some of the things from its past, it sounds like.

Oh, very definitely.

Not only the schoolhouse and the cemetery but helping to do these oral history interviews and to preserve through words what can't be captured any other way. That's a valuable resource for people.

I don't think Craig Haas would have any problem with this, but he and my brother were in business together and friends and so on. He said it, too, at the initial meetings, that just out of respect for Dick, he was going to see that nothing upset our little community. I think that's admirable. I think he meant it, and I think he's lived up to it. What's my favorite saying? They've gone out of their way to stay out of our way. How's that?

[laughter] Good way to put it.

Just like now, they're graveling everybody's driveway and doing all these good things. Sure they want us to like them, but what if we didn't? They could stomp on us at any moment. I think the schoolhouse The cemetery, they had a part in that. They did the outside fence. The county said they were going to fence it, and Midas Joint Venture did that. I'm talking about the outside fencing around the new part, new cemetery, which was set aside by the county. The county would never have

gotten around to that, wouldn't have spent a dime. These guys stepped right in and did it voluntarily.

It seems like what you're describing is kind of the difference between the letter of the law and the spirit of the law. There's certain things that are required of a mining company going into an area, and it sounds like according to your perception, they've gone beyond that, into the spirit of the community.

I think so. I think they could have played hardball and driven their trucks right up the main road. They have as much right to that road as the rest of us. They haven't done that. Initially, they may have done some things that maybe would appear that it was going to be a long, hard time, but they've changed. I mean, they've put their own road out around the town. If they find anything up the hill, they're prepared to build roads around, so they aren't going through. Like I say, that doesn't mean the next mining company will do that, but I think these guys have set an example. It would be awfully hard for someone who didn't follow it to explain.

And the BLM has taken an interest. These regulatory agencies have all . . . they're keeping an eye on what impact the mine has on the town. But the mining company themselves are doing that. They've stepped in and helped with our water situation up there. They've promised us another well if we need it. And yet, they don't need it. They've got their own water system.

It occurs to me, too, as you're talking, that it wasn't because of Midas Joint Venture, but through this process your group, Friends of Midas, has also gotten stronger and more focused and moving forward. The process has been good both ways.

One of the first times Joan, I think, and I met with Craig Haas over at the schoolhouse, after he had said that they would leave the schoolhouse to us, we were over there talking to him, and he said, candidly, "There is going to be a mine here."

Because even at this point we were thinking, "Oh, these guys are just poking around."

He said, "No, there'll be a mine here." And he said that they were going to attempt to alleviate or mitigate any serious impact on the community. But we were all set to go with *The Midas Chronicle* and explained what we wanted to do with that. We wanted to get the word out about Friends of Midas, so that people would know we need their money. He said, "You saw us coming, didn't you?" [laughter] Jokingly.

They paid for that, the first issue of *The Midas Chronicle*, for Dana to put it together. They put up the money for that and the postage to put it out. When they put that out, we didn't put anything in that newspaper to make it sound like they had. We told the story of Midas Joint Venture as we knew it at that point and as Craig had said things were going to happen. And they happened. Without that, we would never have gotten off the ground. Joan would have probably had to take another job, or *a* job.

A job. Come out of retirement, huh?
[laughter]

We'd only have done our second section of pickets.

Is there anything more, as we talk about the history of Midas and the stories that are your favorites, that comes to mind? Anything we haven't covered here today?

Yes, there are a couple. I like the story about Desda Warren. I didn't know the woman existed, even when I knew Gordon

Warren. But I've spent some time talking to her. She came home from school When these people say they came home from school, they all went away to high school, and they'd come home during the break. So that might mean between tenth and eleventh [grades] or after the twelfth, or whatever. Well, she came home from school, and she was walking up the road beyond our place there, what they called the Rock Houses there, the houses of ill repute. And she'd taken her dad's pistol out, and she was just plinking around, shooting at cans and so on, and this guy came running by, very nice, talked to her and so on. That night they had a dance, and that was Jack Dempsey. He came back and made sure he danced with all the girls and so on, but she said he was a perfect gentleman and was always that way. Jack Dempsey story.

Edna Timmons, on the other end of town, who worked for Getchell as a cook The last night before she was headed to go to school in Reno, Governor Balzar and Penrose (was that the name of the guy who was head of the prison?) and Dempsey and Getchell were having dinner. They took up a collection, I think it was twenty-five dollars, and gave it to her to head off to school. Dempsey used to walk her home, back to her place, and she said always just for protection, just a perfect gentleman: there wasn't anything else in mind. And I think those are neat Midas stories.

Yes, the good ones.

And the people are around to tell them.

And those aren't things that would appear in a newspaper or anything else. Good stories.

More recent stories aren't that interesting. [laughter]

But they will be someday, right? You're making history right now.

I've thought about that. We probably should be keeping better track of things that are going on right now than we are.

I'm struck by that, as we were talking, we've kind of documented here today on this tape some of the beginning of your Friends of Midas, and that's a good thing to keep track of, because you're making history by preserving history.

Well, we're trying to document those things. The cemetery we've got pictures from every angle. [laughter]

Good.

Joan, we've got pictures of her with her weed eater and when things were purchased and so on. But the ongoing . . . oh, the meetings and the turmoil and the good times and so on, maybe there ought to be a better record of that than just our memories.

You're going to have to turn into a journal writer again, one of you—or both of you!

Note

1. The Honors Camp doing the work was the state prison work camp from just outside of Winnemucca.

BISHOP AND LORIE NE FERGUSON JOE AND GAYNELL KELLER

*B*ISHOP FERGUSON worked briefly in Midas, Nevada, in the 1930s. Lorie ne Ferguson was born and raised in Midas. Her parents were Frank and Belle Macy; her sister, Fran, was Joe Keller's first wife, now deceased. Joe's current wife, Gaynell, grew up in Fallon. Joe worked in Midas in the 1930s. Bishop and Lorie ne Ferguson have both passed away in the years following this interview.



DANA BENNETT: *I'm talking with Lorie ne Ferguson at Joe Keller's place in Midas, Nevada. It's July 5, 1984. Later in the tape her husband, Bishop, will speak, as will Joe Keller and his wife, Gaynell.*

LORIE NE FERGUSON [LF]: . . . boardinghouse that was there where Brown's house is.

Yes, and who owned that?

LF: Mrs. Eckman. About 1934 when he went to work there. I don't know what year she came here Forty guys eating there,

and I made lunches and waited table. Well, Joe told you about the mines, didn't he?

Yes, pretty much.

LF: I really don't know too much about the mines Just kids, I don't think you paid that much attention. But my mom and dad came here about Was it 1908? I guess it was.

In the very beginning.

LF: Yes, in the beginning. And then my sister, she was the first baby ever born here. They lived in a tunnel, is where they lived, up the canyon. I remember them saying that she wasn't going to have Minerva in the tunnel, so Daddy had to . . . [laughter] to the dump, and that's where she was born. Can you believe that?

Is that [tunnel] still there?

LF: I suppose it is. It was up that Water Canyon, and I don't know what tunnel that would be.

I haven't been up there in a long time.

LF: But she was the first white baby ever born here. She's still alive, too. She lives down in Jackson, California, and her birthday is a day before mine, the eighteenth of July. And she'll be seventy-six.

And then you were born here, too?

LF: Yes.

Now, did you go to school over on . . . ?

LF: No, that one over there. The first school here was on that hill right up here in back of the dance hall. That was the first [school]. And then there was the other teacher's house, where the teachers are, up the hill in back of Kirby's.

How long were you here?

LF: Until 1938.

Now you get to tell me that story. [laughter] Willie told me the story of your elopement, but I want to hear your version. [laughter]

LF: That's terrible . . . got so much nerve.

Well, it sounds like a great story.

LF: Yes, well, it was a dance. We had a dance at the dance hall, and right across the street was where the constable lived. It was right . . . not very [far]. They had a nice home in there, pretty trees. We had some help at cutting the telephone wires.

Oh, you cut the telephone wires?

LF: Yes. [laughter] Down the canyon here. And so when the eleven o'clock shift [passing vehicle obscures comment] constable What was his name?

Fox?

LF: Fox, Al Fox. He was the constable. And so when he went to work, well, that's when we planned to leave. And so they just turned the lights off in the dance hall, and I went out and got in the car, and we left.

Did you go to Elko? Is that where you went?

LF: Yes, and we left. Wayne thought, "Well, maybe they're going to find the phone cut and fix it, so we'd better not go through town." So it used to be . . . if you didn't go under the underpass or go through the underpass, and went to the hospital, then that takes you *through* town, and you get back on [the road again]. We missed that end. He was nervous and scared, and he missed the road. Way up in the valley out there, there was the ranches. So we had to turn around, come back, and get back on the road again. And then we went on to Imlay. He had a sister that lived in Imlay. She was expecting us, so she went with us, and we went and woke up the justice of the peace and was married in Imlay about four o'clock in the morning. [laughter]

Great!

LF: Well, it was a riot. You know, you hear about people eloping now, climbing down ladders. [laughter] I didn't do that.

Cut wires and everything. That's great.

LF: My mother was so mad!

Was she?

LF: Oh yes. She never did forgive me. Never really, never did—never. She came to see me one time at home, but she never would write to me, never. Told me I was never welcome at home again, and I wasn't.

GAYNELL KELLER [GK]: Did you tell her that your mother called Frannie and Joe . . . ?

LF: Somebody had to chase us, because when Joe was going with my sister, Fran Joe had to chase us, anyway. Somebody had to come after us. Joe said, "I don't know what I would have done if I'd have caught you." But anyway, we were *far* ahead of Joe.

Oh, he was the posse?

LF: Yes. They come in pursuit but never did even catch us.

Oh, that's funny. That's a great story.

LF: That's wild.

GK: I thought it was. [laughter]

LF: Anyway, I had everybody in town on my side. We used to work, like I said, at the boardinghouse. And then, because Bish ate over there, he was there from Reno. He was "a wild man from Reno," according to my mother. She was very suspicious of any new person that would come around. Well, anyway, she made me quit working there. There was nothing, absolutely nothing to do around here if you didn't work. And so I just had to stay home, and she just watched me every minute. And that's the only reason she ever went to that dance, is to watch me, you know. And I wasn't quite eighteen. I would have been in two months. But now we've been married forty-six years, so I guess it's going to last. [laughter]

But that was a wild night for everybody in town. They all put in and bought us silverware, everybody. And that was nice. But everybody couldn't see why she was so Well, like I say, she was just too suspicious of everybody. Bish wasn't a wild guy at all.

GK: And then Joe married her younger sister, but he'd been working around here, and she'd known him for years, so she didn't mistrust him.

So that was OK.

LF: Yes. She was only, what, sixteen when she married Joe?

GK: Yes.

Did Bish come up here to work in the mines?

LF: No, he came up to haul loads, and he worked for Wells Cargo. He had a contract to move the Elko Prince dump. And he hauled it over to the mill. Yes, so he was only here three months. I really didn't know him very well. [laughter] Oh, gee.

GK: You can get well acquainted in three months.

LF: We didn't even see each other very much, but

Well, eloping in the middle of the night [laughter] Oh, that's such a great story. Were there ever any actual weddings here in Midas?

LF: Oh yes. Daddy used to marry people—he was the justice of the peace, you know, and he married people. I can remember a wedding out to Meyers's ranch, which now is nothing. I mean, it's just that little Is there even a trailer there now?

I don't know.

LF: There's just a couple of trees. Anyway, it used to be a nice

Secondhand [trailer]?

LF: Yes. It used to be a nice ranch with fruit trees. I mean, you couldn't hardly imagine it now, can you?

No.

LF: And they had a two-story house on there. I remember when Celia (I guess she was the oldest daughter, I know she was) got married, and they had a big party. Then I guess when my older sister got married, they were married here, too. I know they were.

Did they get married in the dance hall, or at home, or . . . ?

LF: [I don't remember] really. Could have been, I imagine they were married here at this home.

Do you ever remember any funerals here?

LF: I haven't really . . . picture of that one coffin, you know.

What about newspapers? Were there any that you remember?

LF: No.

[One was published in] 1914. It's beginning to sound more and more like that was the last one.

LF: They *did* have a paper?

There was two in 1908. Neither of them lasted very long: the Gold Circle News and the Gold Circle Miner. And they were really professionally done. Looked like [it covered] mining . . .

LF: Where did you find that?

Historical society. And I took Xerox copies of them, and I've got those at home. But

Edie has two. I guess there was no paper from then until 1914 when F.J. Benneson did a handwritten paper, mimeographed that off. I guess that lasted a few issues. But there's one copy of that at the historical society. And from what I can gather, that was the last one, was Benneson's paper. And in the paper he talked about the new bull ring in Central Park, and he just knew it was a new gab place that people stand around and shoot the breeze. But Central Park? Where's this park? Where would a park be around here?

LF: I don't know, I've never heard of it, but then . . .

He could have been referring to something, too, that didn't have anything to do with a park. The paper's kind of hard to read, because you have one sentence or two sentences, and then he just leaves you wondering, "What in the heck is he talking about?" Apparently everybody who read the paper [at the time it was written] knew what he was talking about, but after that, nobody knows what he's talking about.

GK: Did Edie tell you about her romance?

Yes, how she met Tim out on the road? Yes, she told me about that. I'm getting all the romance stories. [laughter] Now, the schoolhouse up here, one section of grades was on one side of the school and the other section on the other?

LF: Yes. But before I left home, they were getting down to where there wasn't too many kids, and they were all in one room, and they didn't even need both rooms.

About how many kids were going to school there when you left?

LF: When I graduated from the eighth grade, there was five of us. That was a big class. But there could be, maybe sometimes, just one or two in a class.

Did you have a ceremony with [diplomas]?

LF: Yes, and that was always up here at the dance hall. Anything that they had was always held at the dance hall on account of the lights, because there wasn't any electricity in the school. I used to be the janitor over there, and we used to have a big, old, coal-and-wood, great big, old, round stove. You'd have to go build the fire, and then they burned coal, and you'd get the clinkers down in there, you know. It was terrible. Then after that, they converted it to oil. And I don't know if they ever did get lights in there.

It still doesn't have lights.

LF: It doesn't have lights yet?

No. They don't even have a generator up there, I don't think.

LF: I thought that they would with all these Is it doctors that own that now?

Yes, doctors and dentists.

LF: Who said that they were trying to . . . ?

They don't really come up here.

LF: Don't they?

But there's one other family that comes up here quite a bit and uses it.

LF: If he would have fixed it up a little better

They started to. At least they kept it intact, didn't take it off the site or anything like that.

LF: Yes. Well, I think that was the agreement when they bought it, that they couldn't do anything to destroy the outside of it. It had to stay the same.

And the inside, the blackboards are still up, and the bell's still up there. They pretty much . . . cabinets over on the wall. It looks like later on they converted it where the school was on the right-hand side, and the teacher was on the left-hand side. There's a sink in there now, and there's a shower and different things. But that must have been a lot later.

Do you remember, did anybody have a house that everybody thought was the grandest house or the nicest house in Midas?

LF: Probably Getchell's house, I would say. It was a big house with a screen porch all around it. As a kid, I can remember that flush toilet with the chain way up high on the wall, like what's coming back now. [laughter] You know, they're making them again now. I used to think, "Oh dear, that was so super!" [laughter] So there were a few houses around with bathrooms, too. And Minnie had one, my sister. She lived over there just above where Jimmy Murdock's house is. Those houses burned down, that house where she lived. But there were very few bathrooms.

Yes, I'll bet.

LF: [laughter] To live up here with no bathroom now would be terrible!

We've done it. When we were coming up here . . .

LF: When you first came?

Porta-Potti out in the sagebrush. That was done. And the first Fourth of July celebration that we had up here, that I remember, when Ungers started to rejuvenate that outhouse. They had the bathrooms in the bar, but they were having water problems, and it was a hot summer and everything, so there was an outhouse outside. That's what you got.

LF: They always used to have the Fourth of July races, you know, up and down the street.

Do you remember about any of the other celebrations, what you did at Christmastime or . . . ? Joe mentioned Labor Day.

LF: I don't think there was Labor Day. Did Joe remember a Labor Day celebration? Really, all I can remember is just the Fourth of July.

JOE KELLER [JK]: I think when that guy would come in here (I can't think of his name) that bought that Miners Gold that time from Mr. Warren . . . what was his name? And they had that big Fourth of July celebration up here. He had all the foot races down the street. I think that year they had a Labor Day celebration.

LF: Well, other than then . . .

JK: Maybe it wasn't one of the . . .

LF: Yes, I think so. But when anybody got married, they always had shivarees.

What's that?

LF: Well, a shivaree is to go to their house and bang on cans and make a lot of noise and get them and take them out for a

ride. Old-time shivarees. Do you remember those?

GK: Oh, yes!

LF: Well, what else did they used to do? And then you'd have a party. You'd take them, like to the dance hall again, and everybody'd take their gift to them. But it [was] a whole town affair.

GK: In Fallon it was, well, the [members] of our church did it. I just remember I was just a little girl, and they had the shivarees where a girl that got married in our church. She was a young lady, and she was a really good pianist and taught music lessons. Anyway, everybody had tin pans and stuff. They lived out in the country, and we were all banging on these tin cans with wooden spoons and stuff. We took a great big five-gallon freezer of ice cream and cake and stuff out with us, you know. And then after we got in, we had a party in their house and served ice cream we had brought. And she played the piano, and we sang around the piano and stuff like that. She talked about taking them for a ride. Now I don't remember about *this* particular wedding, because that was in our church, but I remember of other weddings where they always would have the groom wheel the bride down Main Street in a wheelbarrow.

LF: That's right!

GK: And then one time I remember they took the bride and groom up in front of the theater and tied them to a post out there in front of the theater and wrapped toilet paper all around them. [laughter]

Oh, my word! Oh no!

GK: Just when the show was ready to get out, and everybody was coming out, looking, you know.

Oh no! Oh, that's crazy.

LF: There's a girl over there in Alta that was here, and when they got married, she and Charlie, she said they got an alarm clock and set it for a certain time. And she hadn't opened it yet when the alarm went off. [laughter] She still remembers that. She [told] me about it. Just last year we were talking.

Do you remember when the Depression hit?

LF: No, I was just small then, because I was born in 1920.

In 1920, [you would have been] nine years old.

LF: Yes, and I don't remember that. Well, actually, I don't think it really showed around here, because . . .

That's what I was wondering.

LF: . . . everybody . . . You know, no one had too much, but . . . the Depression didn't really hit around here.

JK: That's what I was telling her—the best places to work in the Depression time was around the mining camps. You made more money there than most anyplace else.

BISHOP FERGUSON [BF]: We lived in Reno at the time, and I don't believe that any of Nevada was actually hurt as bad as it was back East in those big cities back there, because . . . Oh, I mean, you just couldn't go out and get a job anywhere, but it wasn't that tough a situation.



[NOTE: In the following section, because several people are being interviewed at once, it is not always possible to distinguish who is talking.]

GK: The banks, I remember when the banks closed. Then that seemed to be kind of a dramatic thing for people around here that had a few dollars in the bank. You didn't have too much in the bank, but what you had, you lost.

Was there a bank here?

LF: No, not here. In Elko.

MAN: At that time, there was only one *big* bank in the state of Nevada.

First National Bank?

MAN: No. Well, it turned into First National. What was the bank's name?

WOMAN: Henderson. It was a Henderson Bank in Elko that we had our . . . and dollars in.

JK: Fallon National Bank, then, wasn't it? Reno National? One man controlled the whole thing.

BF: That's what put the whole state on the blink, more than anything else, when National went caput.

JK: Yes, because those people got out with just a minimal amount of money.

BF: They didn't have a bank here, but they had a jail here.

SEVERAL WOMEN: Yes.

WOMAN: The jail's still here, isn't it?

Yes. Looks like they didn't have too many people in that jail at one time.

LF: I don't think so. I remember a few drunks being held in it.

MAN: Yes, that was about it.

Did you ever hear of a Bamberger here that you remember, or had he already left?

LF: I can remember Daddy talking about Bamberger, but I don't know what I heard about it.

There's a story about him that I'm trying to track down. The story went that he opened up his claim, and anybody who wanted to could come in and help themselves, and he'd furnish the picks and the shovels and bags. That sounds awfully nice for somebody who owns a mine. And I've been trying to see if anybody else [ever heard that story].

BF: There was a Bamberger claim here, wasn't there?

LF: Yes, I can remember . . .

JK: That was the original discovery of Midas, was the Bamberger.

GK: Well, when this was first discovered, it wasn't called Midas, anyway, was it?

MAN: No, it was the Bamberger claim that was the first discovery of Midas.

LF: But it was called Gold Circle.

MAN: Yes, it was Gold Circle; and then, when they put the post office in, they had to change the name, because there was another Gold Circle down someplace, and they had to change it to Midas.

But people still kept calling it Gold Circle, didn't they?

LF: Yes, I believe so, because I can remember Daddy always referred to it as Gold Circle.

Did they have city offices here, like a mayor or a town councilman?

LF: I don't believe so. Just a constable and a justice of the peace, I think.

Were those elected offices?

LF: Appointed, weren't they?

JK: They were all appointed. County appointed her dad justice of the peace, and then the constable was also by the county commission.

BF: When I was here, Fox was the constable then.

LF: Yes, Al Fox. That's who we waited to go to work when we left [to elope].

What else was the dance hall used for? Just dances and graduations?

LF: That's about it, I guess. There was a curtain and a stage, and like I say, all the school things were held up there—graduation. Well, elections. We used to go up there to vote.

Oh, that's where you voted?

LF: Yes. And remember when they used to have—when everybody made up with darky face?

JK: Oh, and they have the costume dances?

LF: Yes, costume dances.

WOMAN: What were those called? No. The plays, colored.

MAN: Oh, what did they call those?

WOMAN: Minstrel shows.

SEVERAL: Minstrel shows!

WOMAN: They used to have those, and I can remember Daddy was always one of those minstrel guys that had the fancy outfits and the high hats, and they put the black on their face.

There were guys in town who'd do that?

LF: Yes, the people right here. They put on those, and those were held up at the dance hall.

GK: And then everybody'd come and sit. You'd see them up on stage.

LF: Yes. They had to have their own entertainment.

BF: That was before I came up here.

LF: I can remember that. Daddy played different instruments for dances. He played banjo, and he played piano. It was sort of chorded, but I mean, it was good music when everybody was playing. [laughter]

JK: He had a french horn, too.

LF: Yes, and he had that bass viol that some kid in Golconda broke one time. I guess that's about all he could play, but he always took part in everything.

JK: The one I enjoyed to watch playing at those dances was Mr. Forsythe. He played the mandolin. And he'd make the darndest faces when he was playing that mandolin, I tell you! [laughter]

LF: Charlie and his saxophone.

Sounds like a regular band up here.

LF: They *did* have some good times. They really did.

JK: Who was up there? A woman's name, that played the piano. She was a Murphy, Mrs. Murphy. She was a good piano player.

LF: Yes, she was. And didn't Mrs. Clawson play the piano?

JK: I think she did, but I don't remember her playing. I remember Mrs. Murphy more, because I never went to the dances until after I got out of high school. I wouldn't even go near a dance till then.

LF: I thought all the kids in town would be up there with their parents. Maybe your parents didn't go?

JK: Might have gone and sneaked in a little bit, but I never . . .

LF: All us kids went to dances with their parents.

GK: I know they did in Fallon.

LF: I mean, and people got dressed up to go to these dances. Can you believe that? You wore your good clothes.

MAN: Well, back then, people dressed. Now nobody dresses up for hardly anything. But then you always put on the best you had for something like that.

Were the dances held weekly, or monthly, or . . . ?

LF: I think when everybody was working around here, they probably had a dance every . . . but I don't think weekly.

JK: About every couple of weeks they had one.

LF: And people would come from Battle Mountain over to dances.

JK: And Tuscarora.

LF: And we'd go over to Tuscarora to dances. Yes. And Battle Mountain. Yes! And they had a ball team. They used to go to Tuscarora and Battle Mountain to play ball.

And then those teams would come here and play ball?

WOMAN: Yes. And the diamond was down there at the gate at Squaw Valley Ranch.

I still can't get over that. Joe mentioned that. That seems like an awful long ways for

LF: Yes, it does.

JK: They used to practice up here in a vacant lot. Primeaux

WOMAN: Yes, where that trailer is now. They used to play ball there, all of the gals, too.

Oh, really? Were they co-ed teams, or were they separate?

LF: I don't remember a girls' team.

JK: We never had an all-girl team.

LF: I don't think so.

Just everybody played?

WOMAN: Did you play softball?

JK: No, hardball.

LF: At night we'd play Run, Sheep, Run.

MAN: Dare Base.

LF: Yes. We used to have a lot of fun doing that in the evening. It sounds ridiculous now when you mention it, doesn't it, all those games?

No.

MAN: Well, it's just like anything else or anyplace else at that time—I mean, there was nothing else to do. If you didn't make your own entertainment, why, you didn't have any.

GK: I know we used to play Run, Sheep, Run [in Fallon] under the streetlights at night, but how did you guys manage?

LF: We had to do all this before dark.

JK: And we played ball and stuff up here . . . used to have the light. We had lights.

LF: Well, we had electricity then.

WOMAN: And they used the drop light one season, huh?

WOMAN: Yes.

MAN: I think they probably put electricity in over here from the power plant about 1930, wasn't it, along in there?

LF: I'm not sure. I know we had power into our house here where Daddy could have . . . he had what was called an electric belt. He had a back problem, and we had a power line put in, but it was used just for that. We didn't iron with it, or we didn't have a light with it or nothing—that's all. They were good enough to do that for him. We

didn't use it for another thing, so we still had our kerosene lights. But then I don't know what year it was that we all got lights.

MAN: It must have been about 1930, because when I come up here, there was a light in front of Primeaux's Store, and a few places had lights. There wasn't too many houses that had them. I mean, I think Jacobson had them over there, because he was a mill boss. And [another] house down there and the office and Primeaux's Store had them. I think the Warrens probably had them.

WOMAN: They didn't put them to all the houses, you mean?

MAN: No, no, they didn't have that much to spare from the powerhouse over there.

Did the kids have any of their own superstitions about places or people? What did you do on Halloween? Were there more tricks than treats?

LF: I don't remember Halloween so much, but I remember May Day when we used to go out and pick these wildflowers and make baskets and put them around at people's doors. And now, you know, on May Day We used to have buttercups, and I've always told Bish about these yellow bells. They were called [that], too. But they smelled so good. I've never seen them anywhere but here. But I bet now the cows have just mowed them down. I don't think there's probably *any*. But these hills used to be just covered with them.

MAN: Well . . . wildflower, even in the wet years up here. Man, I can remember when you used to walk along this hill where the schoolteacher lived, and there would just be a solid mass of a particular flower all over these hills.

LF: All over. Pansies, like. What are they called? Pansies, I guess. They were wild.

MAN: Bluebells and lupine. Indian paintbrushes.

LF: Yes. But those yellow bells, I always remember those.

MAN: And then they had the bluebells. There'd just be a solid mass of them. I mean, the hills would just be colored with them. They don't have flowers

LF: It was funny then, there was no sagebrush out there like there is today.

JK: Well, they had little *low* sagebrush. They had sagebrush, but

LF: Well, not big like it is now. Of course, I guess it's all grown up in the roads. But there was no sagebrush over there like that.

JK: Well, there was no sagebrush in the streets or nothing back then. And then *this* was all sagebrush before I come over here and brushed it out—*high* sagebrush.

LF: I know. But that came up after the house burned down.

JK: Yes, that all grew afterwards. I can remember your dad saying, "Well, the sagebrush will grow in the streets of Midas, and then it will come back someday."

LF: I remember that, too. He swore that Kirby was saying Exxon was supposed to come next week, and they're going to—what'd he say?

MAN: Drill over to the Elko Prince.

MAN: Yes, I knew he was talking about

LF: So maybe this is the beginning.

This is the boom, huh? By [Byron] says there's still lots of gold around here to be taken out. It's just we need a mill to mill it.

?: I'm not sure . . . see it booming anyway. But a couple of people Sure would change it.

WOMAN: Wouldn't it, though? But he was saying they were going to drill clear through to the Miners Gold.

BF: That's where Joe's going to work, on the portal of that up here, Mom, that connects the Elko Prince to the Miners Gold.

LF: When are you going to start that?

JK: Well, I got to see if Ron and Mike . . . we got to go up there and find out how much material it's going to take and give them a price. I want to make sure Ron and Mike's not too busy up there at Elges's, because if I don't have them, I'm not going to do it.

WOMAN: Yes. Wouldn't that be something, though?

JK: I'm just more or less doing it as a favor to John because he's always done the assessment work. That Exxon outfit's coming in there and doing assay

MAN: Who was that saying that Exxon was going to take over Miners Gold?

MAN: I seen them out there over to the Miners Gold and the Elko Prince.

MAN: That's what it is, then.

MAN: They [come from] Utah.

MAN: But the way Kirby felt, just a little bit ago, was they were coming in to drill there. Not anything definite, they're just coming to drill or something now.

MAN: Maybe they just want to do the testing before they take over the

MAN: That could be.

MAN: But what they need to do on that Elko Prince ground over there is to drill it and sink a new shaft over there, because all that old workings is bad down through there. Water down there is what stopped them before, but there's a lot of [good ore in the] Elko Prince.

That'd be wild. Did the streets have names?

MAN: Yes. This is Third Street back here below us here.

I know on the map they have names, but did you all refer to them with names?

MAN: No, we didn't have any names around back then that I know of.

LF: Well, there wasn't that much of a street *out* there, when we lived here. I mean, there was buildings, and then there was roads going anywhere, wasn't there?

MAN: Yes, and then there was a butcher had a little butcher shop right back at the end of this street.

LF: It was a big building. It was three places down in that gully—can you believe that?

MAN: And we had it real good when he was up here, because we had fresh meat. Then he got sent to jail . . .

WOMAN: Sent to prison!

MAN: . . . because he was rustling the cattle!

Oh, no!

WOMAN: Yes, imagine us eating these tin-can eaters!

MAN: I know everybody sure hated to see him leave, because we had the best deal for meat and everything while he was here.

Oh, golly. When you look at the map where they've laid all the—the plot map—all these nicely laid out streets and names and everything.

WOMAN: I wonder when they made that map.

In 1908.

WOMAN: They made that map in 1908?

Well, the first one's 1907, and then they put an addition on it in 1908.

MAN: [The year] 1908 is when that Moffitt Addition was put on [several affirming comments from others] right above where Edie and Timmons are now.

WOMAN: Oh, for Heaven's sakes!

MAN: There's an addition right there, north of them. That's when the addition was put on. But like she said, the first one was 1907.

Summit also had two maps—the first map and then an addition put on—same years. All these nice, laid-out streets and little plots and everything.

WOMAN: I'll be darned.

MAN: Well, isn't that something the law requires before it can be . . . ?

MAN: Before they could make a townsite out of it.

MAN: Well, yes, even to make a townsite, I think, it all has to be platted.

MAN: No, I'm sure you're right—before they could incorporate it into a townsite.

Now, was this a township or just a town, or how was it referred to? Anybody know?

WOMAN: Just "town," I guess.

BF: What's it say on your map, Joe? Mine's in the trailer, I haven't got mine here.

JK: I think it's a town, I think it was referred to as [a town].

BF: Township is the way it's referred to.

JK: I'm pretty sure that's what it was then.



What stands out most in your mind about living here?

LF: [laughter] Well, we had a lot of good times here. We really have had. I don't think it was too bad a place to grow up in, in those years, you know. We never knew anything else, really. I think we were happy here. Must be that a lot of people were—they wouldn't be coming back. You know, when

they grow up, they still come back. There's been a lot of good people here.

Do you remember the red light district?

LF: Oh, of course I do, up the canyon.

BF: She never worked there. [laughter]

JK: She even asked me that question. I never paid any attention to the red light, I didn't know anything about it . . .

WOMAN: Yes, he didn't work up there either.

JK: . . . who Silvertip was, and walked around.

LF: And the Sagebrush Queen. You remember the Sagebrush Queen? But she never really worked at . . .

JK: But she wasn't working in the red light district.

LF: No. She lived out in the sagebrush, actually, didn't she? And that's where she got the name. Then she lived out by Spring Creek someplace?

JK: Somewhere, she lived out in there. She come up to [Winnemucca], kind of a stocky, short woman.

LF: Painted herself up.

JK: Always had an old Bull Durham rolled cigarette hanging out of her mouth.

LF: Yes, she was a toughie, and they called her the Sagebrush Queen.

WOMAN: Well, was she a prostitute?

SEVERAL: No.

She just lived out in the sagebrush by herself?

LF: Yes. I don't think she was married. She didn't have a man. She just lived alone. I think she did.

[Did she] ranch or farm?

WOMAN: . . . cabin out there?

JK: I don't think I can tell you that.

LF: I couldn't tell you how she lived or even existed. I don't know.

JK: I remember when she'd come into town and walk up the street with a cigarette hanging out of her mouth.

Now, this is the first mention I've heard of her. She's great!

LF: Yes, the Sagebrush Queen. [And she lived out by Spring Creek.] Out in there somewhere. She wasn't on a ranch.

MAN: I never paid any attention to her. I don't know what she did for a living.

LF: I don't know either. I guess we never thought in those days where anybody lived.

Another thing when I was a kid, how the Indians would come every spring and work at the ranches. They worked down to Squaw Valley. They'd come in these cars, you know, the old cars with the tops down, with their purple and red kerchiefs on their head and their long dresses, those old squaws. Remember that?

MAN: Yes, they'd come out here, too . . . wagons . . . springs, and during the haying season.

LF: Yes, they'd come here to hay. And they lived in the hills down there in tents. It used to just always intrigue me, all the smoke coming up out of those willows, and those Indians cooking on the ground.

Now, where's the willows?

LF: Just right down at the ranch, where all the tall willows are.

MAN: Down near the Ellisons'.

LF: That's Squaw Valley. You know where the springs are up here? They used to come and stay up there, too, every spring. And they used to wash clothes for the people down there at the ranch, the squaws did, and I think even around here.

MAN: Well, I think Mrs. Primeaux

LF: She used to have an old squaw that came and washed. Yes, she did. They always knew Mom and Daddy. They always came around and stopped.

What were your parents' names?

LF: Frank and Edith Belle, and Daddy always called her Belle. And she referred to him as Mr. Macy.

JK: His name was Francis.

LF: Well, yes, but everybody called him Frank.

BF: Everybody called him Frank, but his real name was Francis Marion Macy.

GK: Francis with an "I," and Marion with an "O."

BF: And her mother's name was Edith Belle.

JK: And Fran's name was Frances Marian. [Loriene's sister and Joe's first wife.]

LF: She was named after Daddy, when they decided they were never going to have a boy.



Willie [Wilcox] mentioned a fish fry that they had out in front of their dance hall. I can't remember if that was an annual thing or something that just happened that he happened to remember. Some guys brought some fish down from Little Humboldt and had a fry out in front of the dance hall.

JK: No, I don't remember any special one. I know we had one up there one time, when Bob and I came up here to do our assessment. That's when these guys was running that tunneling up there on the hill, that little And Squaw Valley Dam was going dry, and all those big fish was coming through the dam in big holes. And everybody in Midas went up there that night. We'd just come down from doing our work that night, and we went up there with nets and shovels. Man, we brought back a hundred fish, some of them were probably about like that. And we had a big fish fry here that night when we got back.

When was that?

JK: That was in about, probably, 1954 or 1955.

WOMAN: Did you have like a big fish fry up in front of the dance hall?

JK: No, I don't remember any of them. I say that's the only one I remember.

WOMAN: Was that a fish fry where everybody came?

JK: Yes, after we all caught the fish, why, I think it was Ruby Warren and some of them cooked the fish after we got back. Everybody that went up there . . .

Sounds good.

LF: I remember in the wintertime how much fun we used to have in the snow. We used to climb that hill over there, and we could go on a sled clear down around Kirby's barn, come clear down the street, clear down to the bridge.

Oh, gee, that's a ride!

LF: Yes. But then you'd have to walk . . .

All the way back, yes.

LF: But we used to have a *lot* of fun in the winter, just a lot of fun in the winter. And we used to do that at night, moonlight nights, I guess. That's one thing we used to have, we used to have an old pump organ that Daddy played.

How neat.

LF: Sure would like to have that [now].

MAN: What ever became of it?

LF: They sold it to somebody in Golconda.

MAN: . . . some pretty hard times before they left here.

LF: They sold it a long time before I left home.

When did they leave here?

JK: They didn't leave here. Your dad died here.

LF: No, he didn't. He died in Winnemucca.

JK: He died in Winnemucca, but he was still living here. Your mother was still living here.

LF: They had moved out to where he died.

JK: I didn't know that.

LF: Yes. They had left here.

JK: We were in Berkeley then, Fran and I was. And they had moved to Winnemucca. And then your mother moved back up here afterwards.

LF: Yes, we brought her back. I don't know what year that was.

MAN: Your dad died in 1943.

LF: Nineteen forty-three, yes. And I don't know how long they lived out there before he died.

JK: Fran came up to the funeral.

LF: Yes, she and I *both* went to that—Frannie and I both.

JK: The reason I remember that date very vividly, she was up here to her dad's funeral when I got inducted into the United States Army. But I was up here before that, that winter before, and they were still living *here*, and he was pretty doggone sick then.

When was the first time you came back here after . . . ?

LF: It was six months. We were living in Tooele, Utah. All this time . . . Daddy finally got around to writing to me, but Mama never did. I was so homesick. And so

we had gone to Reno, and then they came back So we come out to this place. And we stopped at the store, and Daddy happened to be there. And we had to dash down to the house. Somebody hollered that Mama had fainted. Well, she did. She fainted when she knew that I was here. So I never saw him anymore, and we went over to the restaurant and had dinner. Nobody ever came back to see [her]. I think it was like three years that we came back one time. Frannie was in Reno visiting me, and Daddy was sick again. And so they called Fran, maybe she'd better come home. And at that time, we still had a sister that lived here, and she called. And so Frannie asked if I could come. Well, she'd have to come down and ask Mama So she came down, and she said, well, if Bish didn't come, I could come. So we both came up on the stage. And that was about three years after So I never really came home other than that. That was the last [time]. [crying] Crazy people.

MAN: Let's see, that was in 1948 . . . ?

LF: Yes.

Well, I didn't mean to make you cry.

LF: It's OK.

Does Midas now remind you at all of the way it was when you were growing up, or has it changed radically?

LF: Oh, it's changed so much! I wouldn't say that it reminds me much.

MAN: It's altogether different.

LF: Altogether.

MAN: Outside of Primeaux's house and Mrs. Purdy's old house over in here and the old dance hall up there.

LF: And then Mrs. Brown's place up there.

MAN: It's a junk pile now. That's about all that's original.

LF: It was neat, a long time ago.

It looks like it was real neat.

LF: It was neat, and she used to even crochet her curtains. *Crocheted!*

You know, there's still some curtains hanging up there—at least there were the last time I was up in there.

LF: They weren't her hand-crocheted ones, though, I don't think.

I don't think they'd leave those behind.

LF: Well, when you talk to Mrs. _____, she'll tell you about that. Because, I mean, she did leave everything behind, I think, because she got sick and they took her to Elko, to the hospital or something, and she died up there.

WOMAN: She died in the hospital in Elko?

LF: I think so. And somebody just kind of ran away with all of her junk, with all of her stuff.

I always liked that house that used to sit next to where Gordon's is now—a little four-room house with a screened porch on the front.

MAN: That was the Birdhouse.

SEVERAL: Yes.

Oh, I liked that house so much. The peach tree and the apple tree are still behind

there. But I was always under the impression that was Mrs. Purdy's place.

MAN: Mrs. Purdy *lived* there.

She did live there?

MAN: Yes.

LF: She lived right in this house over here.

JK: Yes, afterwards, but she lived up there after See Bergs, when they left here, then we lived in that house—Mother and Dad and my brother and I lived in that house. Then after we left Midas some time, Mrs. Purdy moved up into that house, and she lived there for quite a little while there before she moved downhill I don't remember when she moved down there.

LF: That's the place I really remember Mrs. Purdy moving.

JK: Well, see, you hadn't been up here, but she did live in that house for a while.

LF: It used to be the post office. It used to be built out clear to the street.

This one here?

LF: Not this one right here on the corner.

That one still standing by Kirby's?

LF: Yes, it used to be their post office.

JK: And then Mrs. Lyons moved up there.

LF: Yes, Mrs. Purdy was the gal at the post office, and she lived in the back.

Is that where everybody picked up their mail?

LF: Yes, they had mailboxes.

JK: And then the mail used to come in three times a week, Monday, Wednesdays, and Fridays

So it must have quit coming daily about 1910, then. It used to come daily.

MAN: Well, probably earlier, before that, when I was here

GK: Loriene, do you remember Claude Taylor at all?

LF: No.

GK: He said he used to bring the mail up from Battle Mountain once in a while.

LF: From Battle Mountain?

GK: Yes, when it was delivered up here from Battle Mountain.

LF: I didn't remember of it *ever* coming up from Battle Mountain. Mrs. Miles had the mail for *years*, and they still had it when I left.

JK: And then Trues had it.

LF: Trues! Not Miles—Trues. It was in the 1930s that Claude used to come up here, he was telling us (when he and Mary come up last summer, you know) he used to deliver mail up here.

MAN: Well, you probably weren't too interested in the mail then anyhow—you were just a kid and knew you weren't getting any mail anyway.

LF: We were interested in seeing catalogs. That was all the big deal.

MAN: Oh yes. That was a big deal, looking through the catalogs.

Sears and Montgomery Ward?

WOMAN: Yes, and the Christmas catalogs.

LF: And I remember we had an old horse, and I used to look in the catalogs for a saddle. I wanted a saddle so bad. [laughter]



This mine sitting up here on the side of the hill, that's fairly new isn't it?

MAN: That was one of the last workings up here that produced anything.

In the 1930s or the 1950s?

MAN: No, that was in the 1950s. There'd been some more taken out up on top of the hill there. These two brothers that came in here from Utah and run that tunnel, they took some pretty doggone high-grade ore out of there. They took quite a little bit of money out of that tunnel. And let's see, their names I thought of it the other night, and I can't think of it again now.

Well, there were some miners that were staying down here

MAN: At Kirby's.

Yes. Well, kind of across the street from Kirby's, by that big tree there, and they haven't been back for a couple of years, and then one of those guys showed up last night. He's down there now.

MAN: You mean those two old fellahs that owned that?

They owned it, but their sons or their nephews or something

MAN: They sold it to these guys that got this backhoe up here and that big Cat over there.

Oh, OK. Well then he must just be back visiting. I thought he was back to mine again.

WOMAN: Well, there's somebody come back and do some mining. [laughter]

By seems to think that there's plenty of gold to be taken out. It's just they need someplace to mill it.

BF: Joe's got that same thing.

Oh, really? I'll bet it's just a matter of time.

JK: And her dad, like they told you, always felt that Midas would come back.

I've always been intrigued with Midas, because it never was abandoned. There's always been somebody here.

MAN: Never been a complete ghost town, no.

My sister and I stayed up here by ourselves for the first time in 1978 or 1979, and these Californians came through with their grandkids, and they wanted to show their grandkids a ghost town. And they picked Midas because it said, "ghost town," on the map. "This doesn't look like a ghost town!" [laughter]

WOMAN: When did you first start coming up here?

I first started coming up in 1968, 1969, in there, when I was six.

JK: Your dad came here about 1960, didn't he?

Well, a little later than that. They didn't move from Nebraska until about 1963. It was the early sixties. He'd come up here and go hunting with his brothers and a guy that he worked with at the IRS. And then it started becoming a family affair in about 1968. And we used to camp way, way up there, right before the roads diverge: one goes to Water Canyon, the other . . . We used to camp right up there. And we'd never come into town. We always stayed up there. You know that great big rock up there? We used to slide down it.

JK: Remember Old Clark?

Dad might. It doesn't ring a bell with me.

JK: Well, he camped up there for a couple of years in a little trailer. Then he later moved down where Sabins are, there. And Sabins kind of more or less took care of him till he died. But he came over here from Ely. When my brother and I would come up here to do assessment work, he had a little trailer up there in Water Canyon. And that was in about 1954 or 1955, probably before you came up here.

Yes, that's way before our time.

WOMAN: Well, when did you get that big trailer in?

Let's see, it's before I went to school. Maybe 1979, I think. The first Christmas we spent up here was 1978. And then the summer of 1979, I think, is when we moved in. That's

a single-wide that they just built onto. And that's when they moved the trailer in there. And we had a twenty-foot Proowler that we parked down by Kirby's. Mom and Dad got to stay in the trailer, and we kids, if it was the fall, spring, or summer, we slept in the tent. If it was winter, we were in the bunkhouse. And that first Christmas I thought I was going to die! There's only a cookstove in there for heat, so you had a choice of either being smoked or frozen. [laughter] So we opted for frozen. And New Year's Day I remember waking up and there was frost on my sleeping bag from my breath, and my boots were frozen to the floor. [laughter]

MAN: Here she's wanting us to remember all these dates, but she can't even remember back then! [laughter]

Well, Dad can tell you. Well, I'm almost positive it was about 1979, because it was right before I went to school.

WOMAN: So you'd come clear up here for Christmas?

Yes. Oh, the first year, too. I guess we don't really need to record all this stuff—about done, anyway. The first year we came up here, Mom and Dad said there's no room for a tree. We're going to cut down a thing of sagebrush and have that for a Christmas tree. Oh, we were mad! We were so mad, we didn't talk to them the whole day [that] we went out to cut down that sagebrush. Went clear down to the end of the road, cut down a great big clump of sagebrush and brought it back and put it up in the bunkhouse.

 PHIL GEMMILL

PHIL GEMMILL first visited Midas in 1953, when he was a young man working at the Getchell Mine, and he later became better acquainted with the area when his father mined there in the late 1950s.



VICTORIA FORD: Today is August 25, 1998, and I'm here with Philip Gemmill in Grass Valley, California. We're going to be talking about mining at Midas during the 1950s today. Phil, would you start by telling me your parents' names?

PHIL GEMMILL: My dad is William Gemmill—goes by Bill. That's my dad, and my mom is Evelyn Gemmill.

Evelyn, OK. And you were born in what year?

Nineteen thirty-two. November 1, 1932, in Little Rock, California, down in Los Angeles County.

Since we're talking specifically about Midas today, let's trace the story of how your father ended up in Midas.

My dad worked in Grass Valley here at the Empire Mine and the Brunswick Mine.

That was his occupation, miner?

Miner. Then in 1952, we started logging, and he was a timber faller, and I was doing the bucking [i.e., using a chain saw]. And then in 1953, he went to Getchell [the Getchell Mine, located north of Golconda, Nevada]. I mean, my Uncle Steve was working there and told Dad about the job, so Dad went to Getchell in 1953.

And that's the mine, the Getchell Mine, which is located . . . ?

Getchell Mine in Humboldt County, about thirty miles southwest of Midas, so it's in the same area. And Getchell at that time was running tungsten. It was under a government subsidy, so Dad worked at



Phil Gemmill, 1998.

Granite Creek—actually, in the Lower Granite. Then in 1957, I think, they ceased mining operations.

OK. So he worked there for four years?

Four or five, I think.

And where did your parents live while he was there?

They lived right at Getchell. It had its own camp. It was one of the best ones. I mean, they kept the houses painted. It was good for families. They had a little school there, but the high school kids had to go to Winnemucca.

And you have a picture of your mom and aunt and your dad when they were living there?

Oh, yes. Well, my aunt never lived there.

But she was visiting? That was during the time that your dad would have been working there?

Yes. They had a nice home there.

OK. And then they closed this tungsten mine, correct?

The tungsten portion of it. Getchell was still a gold mine, but they weren't working it, because they had arsenic in it, and they would have trouble burning the arsenic off without killing everything around. So Dad (before they closed it), he was one of the last miners—him and a fellow named Clarence Nugent. They ran several drifts. So then, when that closed, Dad moved Mom and my two sisters and brothers back to Grass Valley here, and then Dad went to Round Mountain.

And why [did he move the family] to Grass Valley?

Because he owned his home here.

I see. OK. So that was kind of home base, even though they were out at these mining camps?

Yes, they never sold the house. They don't live in that same house now. Of course, Mom and Dad are gone now, but at that time they owned their home.

I see. OK. So he moved the family back here, and then he went to Round Mountain outside of . . . ?

Well, Tonopah would be the major closest city. I think Austin is on the northern end of it.

And what was he doing there?

They were building a mill, so Dad was doing carpenter and construction work. He wasn't working in the mining there, but he was working in the mill. And he got a letter from Andy Jones, who was the boss at Granite Creek.

Had he been your dad's boss?

He was his boss at Granite Creek. So Andy and his nephew, Herb Lewis, got this drift at the Miners Gold to go over and try to get into the Elko Prince. And the reason they were doing that was . . .

Did he own that?

No.

Andy didn't own it.

And come to find out years later, the company that was mining there didn't even own Miners Gold, because that belonged to the ranch. I think Clover Valley Ranch owned all that property, so there was kind of a conflict there. I think they were kind of illegal.

Did they know it at the time, do you think?

My dad never knew it, because I think he was deceased before even I found out that it belonged to . . . I believe it belongs to the people that had Clover . . . or not . . . Squaw Valley, in that area.

Interesting. But this company approached Andy to do this work?

They were promoters, I think. I never met any of those guys, but Andy and Herb, and then John Sabin and his wife, Evelyn, they owned the waterworks there at Midas for years. And I think John worked with them. There was somebody else, but I can't remember his name. But then Andy wrote

Dad a letter. Well, Dad kept asking the people at Round Mountain. They were going to lay off people. They were about done with the mill, and Dad wanted to know if he was going to be kept or let go, and they wouldn't give him an answer, because my dad was a good worker. So Dad finally said, "Well, just have my check ready." At the end, you know, he gave them notice. So he went to Midas. Then he worked, oh, I don't know how long, a couple of months or three months. But they were supposed to run a three thousand-foot drift to hit the Elko Prince.

And what was the whole point of this? Was the point [to develop] the Miners Gold? Or was the point [of all this work to benefit] the Elko Prince?

Well, the way I understand from my dad, they wanted to get into the Elko Prince. But on the Elko Prince side, there was no water.

There was no water?

There was no water. So I kept asking my dad, why didn't he just buy a truck and haul the water? But he said no.

And in 1938 (I believe it was 1938) Getchell (I mean the guy that founded the Getchell Mine) went over there, and the way I understand, the Elko Prince was pretty good ore. They had a lot of pillars, and Getchell took all the pillars out, which made all the stopes unsafe. So they were trying to come in from the back way to get into . . . I believe that's the way it is. I mean, I could be wrong on that.

When you say "pillars," so they were . . . ?

They were the support that kept the big stopes from collapsing.

Rather than putting timbers in, they just left pillars of ore in there?

Yes. Well, I don't even think timbers would [have held the ground], because they took out quite a bit, the way I was told. And then, when he took those pillars out to get the rich ore, that made that very unstable. So in order to work that, I believe, they were going to come in through the Miners Gold side. But anyway, when Dad started working there, things just weren't going too well. Now, see, Andy (I really think the world of Andy, because he was my boss also), he was on equal footing with everybody else, and so I don't know if Andy had . . . I don't think Andy was the problem, but Dad said they just weren't making the money, and so he [Dad] quit. Then Andy quit, and then Herb quit, and Andy and Herb went back to Getchell. They were working on the gold part, so they could sell that to a big corporation. So Andy and Herb left, but Andy felt that he was responsible for this [Miners Gold] contract, so he called Dad up, because Dad went back to Grass Valley.

When Dad was working there with Andy and them, I came over. My sister got married in Reno, and so my mom and Andy's wife was with us, and my brother and his wife and, I think, he had two little kids then . . . we all came over to visit Dad. And we stayed, I believe, at Andy's place.

And this was during that break where he'd quit?

No, no, that was when they were still working. Except her [his sister] and her husband, they went on their honeymoon. But we went over, and that's where I took the picture of Herb and my dad at the portal of Miners Gold. And we visited there, but Dad said they just weren't making good progress.

So Dad went back. [I've] got an interview, just like what you're doing but with my dad. And my dad left out something—[I don't know] who he was talking with, but he said, "I told them I had

to have more money." And the person he was talking to, I don't know if it was the promoters or with Andy, but whoever it was gave Dad, he said, \$1.50 a foot to run a drift. And part of the deal was that they would bring all the material to the heading—to where they're drilling. In other words, he didn't have to bring the rail in. They didn't have to bring in the powder.

When Dad went over to Getchell . . . the big superintendent was Elmer Schnell, of the underground mining. And so Elmer said he would come over, because I think Elmer was getting laid off, too. So Elmer came with Dad, and they worked, and they made six feet a round, and they made two rounds a day. In other words, they were making twelve feet. And Dad said in a letter they were making better than day's wages. They weren't getting rich, but they were doing all right. So Elmer and Dad . . . (I'm still getting ahead of myself.)

That's all right. We'll get it all in there.

Because remember I was telling you about when Andy and Herb were still working there with Dad. They ran over to open up an old tunnel to an air vent, and it went to the surface. But with a mucking machine, they kept mucking out, and they weren't getting anywhere. They thought, "Man, this has got to quit! We've got to be able to see daylight up through there."

And so my dad said, "We'd better go up on top and see what's going on." And when he went up there, there was a big glory hole up there. Every time they would take out some, it would just keep sloughing in, just like a big funnel.

Oh, just caving.

Just like an hour-hand clock.

Hour glass, where the sand is sinking in, yes.

Yes, as soon as you take more out it just kept coming. So that was abandoned, because, basically, when you run a drift, and if you go in far enough, you've eventually got to have another way in or out, and that's what they were trying to do. But, I think, if you're working just two of you, you can get by. I'm not sure on the law on that anymore.

Yes. But they were trying to find another way out, and for air and everything.

Yes, because I remember seeing . . . when I visited my Dad, I went in there while they were working, and they had air ducts blowing air in.

OK. What kind of power was being used to blow the air in, do you remember?

Well, they had a generator. They had an air cooled It was a German-made generator. It was kind of unique.

Really?

But it was a noisy little thing.

Do you remember the brand?

No, but it was air cooled. I've seen them since then, so it's being sold in America quite a bit.

But it was unique at that time?

To me it was, because it was air cooled.

And so that one generator sent air in. Did it also provide electricity in there?

Yes. When Elmer was there, Elmer was divorced, so he lived up there at the mine. They had a little cabin there, which is still part of their life to this day. He had a shower, because I remember we'd go up and use his shower. But it [the generator] would operate

for his place and for the tools for sharpening the bits, and then Now the compressor, for some reason it was, I think, diesel powered. It wasn't a big compressor, but it was big enough to do what they're doing. It was a diesel powered.

And a diesel-powered compressor was used for what?

For air, for the compressed air for drilling and the mucking machine, because they did have a mucking machine. Then they also used a generator to charge the battery on the little . . . (I can't think of the name they called them) but the little locomotive, the *little* one. It was battery powered.

Which hauled the ore cars in and out?

Yes. It's not like what they have there now, all diesel powered.

Right. In the picture we were looking at, it almost looked like an ore cart, but that's actually that small

Locomotive. I've got another picture, and I believe they used one-ton cars.

OK. So they were blasting, mucking—they had a mucking machine to help with that—and doing all the drilling themselves. This was the work your dad was doing.

Yes. Dad and Elmer did all of that. Like he said, they were getting two rounds a day, because the ground's soft. I mean, it was not hard ground. They had to timber it, too. Not a lot of timber, but there were certain places where they had the timber to keep it from sloughing in. So Dad and Elmer did all that. They laid their own track.

But part of the deal was Now, I cannot remember who else was working

there, because they had to have somebody outside.

Were they working around the clock?

No, no.

They were just working during the day?

Yes. They'd make shifts, I mean, two rounds in an eight-hour [day].

But you were saying there were two underground, but there had to be somebody working outside?

Yes. I don't remember who that was. There was a family there, and I think he worked there. I cannot think of his name, but he had a bunch of kids. See, that helped with the school.

They had enough kids to keep a school open then?

Well, my Dad and Mom had two. My brother Gilbert went there [for] first grade; and Carol [my sister], I think, was in the third grade, third or fourth grade. And so they went, and then there was the ranch, Squaw Valley Ranch. There was a . . . (oh, I can't think of *his* name right now), but he had a couple of kids. And then I think this other family, they had about five or six.

OK, so that made plenty for the school.

The school. But that all came when my dad came back the second time, because when my dad was there with Andy and Herb, my dad was just living there by himself, because we went over to visit him when my sister got married. My mom went with us, and I think we stayed at Andy's, because . . . Later on, they had the bar down in Midas where Les is right now.

OK, and so your dad quit, and then Andy called him to come back, and then this time he brought the family back with him to Midas?

Yes, they came back.

OK. And so, did they live in town, or did they live up where he was working at Miners Gold?

No, they lived in two different places. The first place is (you may not know it), it's right behind where John Fitzgerald lives. It's going up towards the Miners Gold. The house is still there, but it's falling down. I mean, no one lives in it. But it was so drafty that Mom said, "We can't stay a winter here." It was just in such poor shape. So then they moved up to kind of kitty-corner from where Dan and Joan [Bennett] live [now].

Because you showed me the pictures of that, and that's where the new brick house stands now.

The fellow that works for the railroad. That's where they lived.

And then your dad went back and forth to the Miners Gold from there?

Yes. Dad, at that time when he came back, he had his 1955 Ford pickup. Then he bought a brand new, 1959 Ford. But he used that to haul the fuel.

Oh, for the diesel compressor?

Yes, and the gas. I think both of them were diesels. The generator was diesel, too.

OK. It was air cooled, but it was also a diesel.

It was diesel, and that's what made it, to me, different. And I've seen them after that.

But Dad, he told several times [about] when the snow was so heavy that he still got up there with that Ford. He just chained up and [was] pushing it [i.e., the snow] over the bumper, because it's a grade all the way up.

And so when he went back, he got the wages that he needed, and they were doing twelve foot a day. And then, were they right on target, where they were going into the Elko Prince? How did that go?

Well, they had an engineer, originally, come in, and said they had to go thus and thus. See, the way I remember going into the Miners Gold, the old workings were to the right. If you're facing the portal and you're walking in, everything was to the right. Well, then when they started, they swung to the left.

Which would have been north instead of south by what you showed me on the map?

Well, they didn't make that big of a swing. Yes, it'd be north. So then they went by that old place where the old drift . . . that went over to the air vent. Well, then they kept going, but they thought they should be hitting where they were going. And so my dad said, "There's an engineer over at Getchell. We can get him to come over." The promoters would have to pay him, and Dad said he was good. I do not know his name. My dad's gone, so I can't even ask him that. But anyway, when he got him, the guy came over and said, "You're off." I think they had to veer a little more to the left. I'm not sure, but he told them where to go.

How to get back on track.

On track, and told them how far to go. And then they ran the drift. Now the way I remember it, they were forty feet above, so

they had to sink a shaft, and they were right on—where that guy said, I mean, he was right on, because they sunk a forty-foot shaft. Now, I saw the shaft before they bit through, because I was in there. I went back in and watched my dad. You shouldn't be back there, but because I worked in a mine, I went [could go] back there.

I'm still curious about mining. I go in where I shouldn't. [laughter] I still go in old mines, because every one of them is interesting to me.

Yes. So they sunk that shaft, and then they were right on?

Then they broke through, and, of course, the cold air, because there was air [coming from the other end] from Elko Prince. So then they got all this nice, fresh air. So Dad lowered Elmer on a windlass they had. Of course, they had to use the windlass to haul, because they were mucking into a windlass bucket, and it was all hand powered. They didn't have any power.

They didn't have any power down there?

No. They had air for the mucking machine, but I don't think they had an air tugger or anything, because, I think, they did it by hand. Or maybe they *did* have a tugger. I'm not real sure. Elmer went down, and he was in one of the drifts, and he found an old wheelbarrow under there.

And so I asked my dad, I said, "Did you go down?"

He said, "No."

And I said, "Well, why not?"

He said, "Aw, you've been in one drift, you don't need to go." But I'm curious, so I'd have to go look.

But then that was the end of it. They hit it, then the company said, "Well, we're going to close it down."

What did they find when they hit it? What kind of shape was it in, the Elko Prince?

Well, that part, I don't think Elmer really explored too far, but where he was, was OK. It was just a drift. But I don't even know if he was sure what drift it was, because he never worked in the Elko Prince, or at least I don't *think* he did. But Dad said the funniest thing was they hit ore coming through.

In the drift or in the shaft?

No, in the drift.

In the drift they hit good ore?

He said, "We were hitting stuff that looked pretty good. Of course," he said, "I'm not a"

That was one of my questions—did they assay any of it? Were they checking any of it?

Dad said it became strange to him. He said they *paid* him—there was no problem with the money coming in. They paid him, but when Dad said, "We're getting into some good ore, or it looks good," then they weren't interested. It was like they were getting this money from somewhere, and they had to spend some of it. And that was the weirdest thing. Dad said he couldn't understand, because they

But they weren't developing the mine once they saw the good ore?

I think they might have known they didn't have any control over the Miners Gold.

Because, you said, that wasn't something that they owned?

Yes. They didn't own that, because I found that out. [tape paused]

OK. So things were kind of strange, and it wasn't until later that you put it all together and figured out that this was just a promotional deal?

Dad said it was a promotional deal. It was a Utah outfit from Salt Lake City somewhere. That's where the money came from. And I never met any of the people. But the money . . . as far as I know, Dad got paid. They got paid regular. I don't think they were even held up. But Dad said they were hitting what he thought was good rock, and he said it was just dumped over.

I said, "Why didn't you dump it in a special pile?"

He said, well, not having it assayed or anything, he couldn't prove how much it was. But I found out in the last few years that they didn't even have jurisdiction over that mine, but no one questioned [it]. I guess, even the ranchers. I may be wrong on this.

Yes, but from what you can tell, the company in Salt Lake City didn't have jurisdiction there?

Well, they didn't have a claim to it. They evidently made a claim, but it was, I understand, patented ground that belongs to Now, I don't know how far back. I mean, the three thousand feet, they may have been out of the claims, but all their workings was coming from

OK. And what was the point of going into the Elko Prince? What was the understanding? Were they going to mine that?

Well, that's what Dad said. But like I asked him, "Why?" He said it was [to find] water, because when you drill, you have to have water, and the Miners Gold had water. I mean, I can remember seeing it coming out

of the pipe. It was just crystal clear, cold water. Not the part where they were working but from some of the older works, because it was clear. And I understand that the water outfit, they tapped into it for the town of Midas, because during some dry years, water was kind of scarce, even in Midas.

However, there was no water in the Elko Prince?

That's what Dad said or what he was told. There was no water. So, evidently, back when they were mining the Elko Prince, they hauled their water, or got it from somewhere else. But this outfit didn't want it.

And the biggest thing was, like I said, Getchell took out the pillars. And I said, "Dad, well why didn't you just go down, further down the canyon, and run a new drift in?" He said they didn't want to do that.

The point was to try to get into the Elko Prince to mine?

The Elko Prince was their main object. I remember when I was over there, that I drove up to the Elko Prince. Dad had put a water jug there, kept it inside the portal. Because of the cold air coming out, it kept it real cool. And I walked way back in there, a long ways back into the Elko Prince. It's caved in now, back where they had a workbench back in there. You go in there maybe three hundred to five hundred feet or so. But I've been way back in. As a matter of fact, I could have went further, but it looked pretty bad, and I was a little leery.

And the Elko Prince is where they took the pillars out. So when your dad got in there, was it all caved in?

Well, no, Elmer didn't get that far. But coming in from the Elko Prince side, my dad went way back in there, too, but they

couldn't get into the part they wanted to work, because it was all tore up and loose ground, and so it would be a hazard. So I don't know what their main object was, if they would go further down or get further back, because, as you know, now we're finding gold, like up here at [the] 1601 [level] in Allegheny, that they passed Now they're using metal detectors, and they're finding gold that they were just a few feet from in the old days. I think this is pocket gold, if I'm correct, over at Miners, in that area.

"Pocket gold," meaning . . . ?

Well, here at the Empire Mine, or Brunswick, or the Idaho Maryland, they go in veins. They can follow a vein, and there'll be gold just all the way. But over at Allegheny, which is up close to Downieville, California, here, the gold would be in just a pocket. Then there'd be no gold You can run your drift farther, and there'd be no gold, and then you hit another pocket.

And what was your dad finding in the Miners Gold then? Was it veins, or was it . . . ?

You know, that's something I don't really understand, because I don't think the gold over there What's the Snyder's?

Ken Snyder Mine?

Ken Snyder Mine, I understand that's kind of like pocket. I don't know. I assume that. That's what I'm hearing. I may be wrong on that. But where Dad was working, he just said it was good-looking ore.

So he didn't say whether it was a vein or pockets or exactly

I don't think he actually saw nuggets, no.

But he was seeing good value.

That's what he said. They mentioned that they told the people, and they weren't interested. They just said, "Keep going until you hit."

Yes. And then once he hit?

That was the end of it.

They shut it down.

That was it. I mean, they shut it down and moved the stuff out—what was there.

And then he was out of a job again?

Yes. He came back to Grass Valley. Then he went for construction work, highway construction, until he retired.

OK. But he kept the place over in Midas, did he?

He never did own it. No, he rented it. That's kind of funny, because I don't think they paid much, because it was . . . They're more like shacks. Can I make a statement about my mom, when she was over there?

Sure.

She told me years later, she said that was one of her best years of everywhere she lived, that she enjoyed it so much. They would go out, and they would hunt deer and chukars and [go] fishing. And she just loved it. *Dad* loved it. It was just a very enjoyable place to work.

So Midas was just truly a wonderful place for your mom. She really enjoyed it.

Right. And you know, my wife, Laura, does not like it there, but I love it. My son loves it, and his wife loves it. It's just the country . . . And, of course, the mining.



We're back after a short interruption, and you were in the middle of a thought about the country and the mining there.

Well, I like to look at old mines, and there's a lot of old tunnels that are . . . You know, if you worked in a mine, you understand, and you try to figure out how they did it, why they did it. And some of them went in just a little ways and stopped dead. And then, you figure they had to do all that by hand. They used a drill with a single jack, and all that hard work, and then just back out for no reason. Well, they didn't hit any ore. That's the reason. But why they even *started* is beyond me. But it fascinates me.

I can remember when I first started going to Midas, one of the mines, you'd find old ore cars, but they're not there now. And at the Miners Gold, they still had the old compressor there, with the old part of the gasoline engine that ran it. And I hope it stays there, because it goes way back into the late 1910s or early 1920s. I mean, it's still there.

Tell me, how old were you when you first went to Midas?

In 1953, I think, I was twenty years old. So when I started working at Getchell, I was twenty, because I celebrated my twenty-first birthday underground.

Underground?

Yes, because I was working the night shift, and then when midnight came (but I don't remember what day I was born, I mean, what hour I was born), I was underground.

So you were working at Getchell. And then tell me about your first trip into Midas.

Well, being a single guy and being a young guy, there were a lot of families there [at Getchell] that had a lot of teenage daughters. This one particular girl really interested me, so her and my sister, Barbara, and another boy that lived there, David Leon—I had a brand new Ford pickup, 1955 Ford—and we drove to Midas. When we got there, the town was absolutely deserted. There was *no one* there. I think there was a Mrs. Brown. She lived there, but she was in town that particular day.

"In town," meaning Winnemucca?

Winnemucca, because this girl, this Peggy, she knew Mrs. Brown, so we went up to her house, and, of course, she wasn't home. But, you know, you go up and down the streets, and there were a lot of cabins and houses but nobody there.

Was this when your dad was working up there?

No, he was still working . . .

You were all still working at Getchell?

Yes. This was in 1955. I was working at Getchell, and Dad was working there.

So 1955, nothing going on in Midas.

No, I don't believe there was anything. I was reading Dana's book.¹ I think there might have been small activities now and then, but nothing I saw.

OK. Then I was just going to ask, did you continue to go back and forth? Or did you go back when your dad was there? Tell me more about your connection with Midas.

Well, Andy Jones, after he quit the Miners Gold, then he went back to Getchell.

Well, then he bought property there [in Midas], and that cabin (I showed you where Unger owns now), well, Andy was building that. So we would come over and see Andy. We started coming over, my first wife and I. In 1961 we went over there.

As you're going up to Miners Gold, past Dan Bennett's house, there used to be a rock house, and it used to be the house of ill-repute. And Andy and Anne lived there, and so my first wife and I (we were just barely newlyweds), well, we spent the night there in the Rock House. I remarked that they had a gas refrigerator, and it was nice to get cold soda pop and that. But we spent the night there. I remember that particular night I got sick for some reason, but I felt fine the next day. Then we went over to Kelly Creek, and that's where I got those rocks I was showing you.

So you kind of just visited. Did you ever actually work in Midas?

No, I never worked there.

You went there with a girlfriend, and you went there to see your dad, and you went there with your first wife, but you didn't actually work there during the 1950s.

During the 1950s, no.

So all of it was like visiting your dad, going with him underground, listening to what he had to tell you about his work and so on.

A lot of it, stories about it, was in later years when my dad got up into his late seventies and early eighties, because I really enjoyed my dad after I became an adult. My dad was good when we were kids, but things were harder back in those days. I mean, you just didn't have the money. And so I started enjoying my dad, and I loved to listen to his mining stories, because Dad was a good miner. He was a superb miner. No matter

where he went, he had no problem getting a job underground. And even on construction work, he had a reputation of being a good, hard worker. In his last few years, he was a powder monkey for construction jobs on the highways.

What's a powder monkey?

Well, he would blast the boulders. They would drill them, and my dad would load them with the powder and blow them.

So, something that he learned underground was then still useful in building roads and so on.

Oh, yes. My dad never made a fatal mistake working underground. Common sense.

Because you said. . . how old did he live to be?

He was eighty-two years old when he died, and he died of heart failure, and nothing to do with any . . .

With mining problems?

Well, he did have a little bit of silicosis in his lungs.

Did he?

But not enough to do any damage. My dad was a heavy smoker. I mean, you look at most of the pictures I've got of him, he's got a cigarette in his hand or mouth.

But at least for the blasting and so on, he must have been careful, because if they weren't, they didn't live to a very old age—miners didn't.

Well, there were a lot of things you just didn't do. Like when you're loading a round, my dad always put in the first stick, then you use a wooden stick to smash it in there. Then, the next would have the fuse in it, but you always put that up against another stick of powder that's already in the hole, because they used powder. At Getchell they used 40 percent Hercules or Trojan, and over at Midas, when he worked at the Miners Gold, they used stick powder.

I understand now when Dad worked on the freeway, on 80 [Interstate 80], on Donner Summit, they used that, where they'd blow the powder in. But underground, he used the box.

So you're saying that part of his work in road construction was the Donner Summit, the freeway?

Yes, he worked on Donner Summit. He did a lot of blasting.

You can see his work every time you drive over there, then?

Yes. I can almost remember where it was, but I'll show you a picture later of the rock piles when he was working.

So, when he was working at the Miners Gold, he was using stick powder, sticks of dynamite?

Yes, they'd use just regular 40 percent. I believe it was Hercules. Getchell used both Hercules and Trojan, and I think they were buying their powder from Getchell, because I think Getchell still had a huge powder magazine. Of course, they had to store their powder in a bunker. That's still there at Miners Gold. It's just a little ways up above where the portal is.

He really enjoyed it there. Dad enjoyed it, too, because he loved to hunt and fish.

So in their off time, when he wasn't working, then they would do that.

Oh, yes.

How long did that project take them? Do you remember?

About a year.

About a year to do that three thousand feet?

Yes, they worked a year. I think [that] counted the first time, too, or maybe a little longer.

While he was working, was there other work going on in that area?

Not that I know of. I don't remember.

No prospecting, no mines operating?

Well, I think (I may be wrong on this) John Sabin prospected around a little bit, but I don't think there was any That was the biggest operation. See, when Dana was writing her book and that, she didn't even think about the mining part, by the people being there in the 1950s, so there wasn't a lot of activity, at least during that time. See, that was in 1958 and 1959.

Right. And that was about the time Midas was kind of being discovered for the hunting and fishing—the things that your parents were enjoying out there.

Yes, if I had sense, I would have bought some property then, instead of waiting until I did, because we could have got it like fifty dollars a lot. But now it's way up there, just to get it. And I knew Pete and Betty Vander Wende. That's where I bought our property from.

I just want to make sure that I've asked you all the questions that we can about your time, mostly visits to Midas, but also your dad's time of working there. Unless there are any other stories that you can remember that your dad told you about that time there, I think we've really covered the work from the Miners Gold over to the Elko Prince.

The only thing I can think about was the schoolteacher coming there, and he lived with my mom and dad.

And that was Laverl?

Laverl Schofield.

And you've got a photo of him?

Yes.

And that was in the 1950s.

That was the same time.

Tell me that story. That's a good story, even though it's not about mining and milling, about this schoolteacher that didn't know what he was getting into.

Laverl, he graduated out of the university in Oklahoma, and they had these job openings in Nevada, and they had about four or five places. So he just pointed to Midas—no idea where it was. He didn't know it was twenty-nine miles of gravel road just to get there. And back in those days the road wasn't very good. [laughter] And so, I believe, he had a 1955 Ford sedan, and he drove out there, couldn't believe that he was on this gravel road going nowhere. When he got there, there was no store, no place to live. He found the school. I believe he spent the first night in the school. But no restaurants. [laughter] I think Andy

Jones No, they didn't even have the bar then. They were working there then. So my mom and dad took him in. But he just came there, and it was unbelievable. He didn't know *what* he was going to do. [laughter]

No facilities at all for the new school-teacher?

No, it was just like going out in the big nowhere.

Because you were saying that would have been in 1955, 1956, 1957?

Well, I believe, he came there in 1958.

And so, there were very few buildings at that time, too, correct?

Well, there were a lot of buildings. Most of them were still

But it's changed some since then?

It's changed quite a bit. I mean, even since when I bought property. My wife and I bought it in 1987, I think, we bought our property. And I think Dick Rowe was building his house across from the school. There were very few back in 1958, other than the original old buildings. Most of those are still there. Some of them have been fixed up, but I think Evelyn and John—I *think* I'm saying the right name—Sabin, they had the house where they're at, and it's still the same way. It was a pretty nice place. I believe it's John. He passed away.

Right, but Evelyn's in Reno. In fact, I was going to talk to her, because she was there [at] the same time that your dad was there.

Right. Yes. And she'd be an interesting person to talk to. She could give you more detail, because she lived I can tell you

an incident when Dad was working. I don't know how it happened, but one of the mine cars, Dad dumped it, and it hit John's foot, and I think it broke his foot or something. I don't know if it broke a toe. It didn't break a leg, but it hit his foot. So that happened at the Miners Gold when John worked there. I believe that was the first time.

So was John Sabin working with your dad up there?

He was one of the fellows. I think there were four fellows. There was Dad, Andy, Herb Lewis, and, I think, John. And then the second time, after Andy and Herb left, I don't really remember who else was there.

So I'll have to ask Evelyn if John went back again.

I don't know if he was working there then. I don't know.

OK. That was about a month break in there? Is that about right? Do you remember?

Well, it had to be a little bit, because Dad came back. And then, Mom moved back with him. I don't believe she was there the first time. She might have been.

OK. But she was definitely there the second time.

The second time. But I think the total time was a year. But like I said, Dad enjoyed it, working there. But I don't even know if Elmer is still alive. I really doubt it, because he was about my dad's age, because Elmer would have been an interesting person to talk to. He was the superintendent of the underground mining at Getchell during the early 1950s.

Note

1. Dana Bennett, *Forward with Enthusiasm: Midas, Nevada, 1907-1995* (Reno: Great Basin Press, 1995).

JOE AND GAYNELL KELLER

*J*OE WORKED in Midas, Nevada, in the 1930s. His first wife, Fran (now deceased), was raised there along with her sister Lorie Mae Macy Ferguson, who appears elsewhere in this volume. Gaynell grew up in Fallon, Nevada.



DANA BENNETT: *This is Dana Bennett, and I'm talking with Joe and Gaynell Keller at their home in Midas, Nevada. It's July 5, 1984.*

JOE KELLER [JK]: Well, I worked over in the mill.

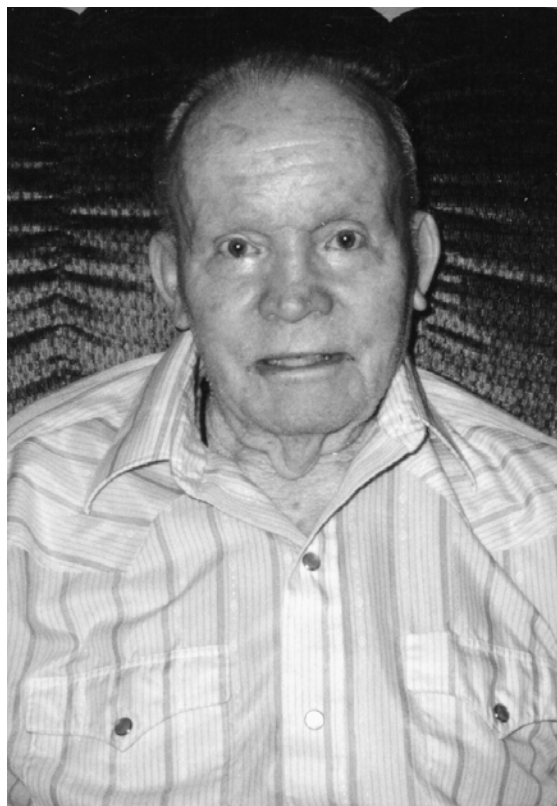
The Getchell Mill?

JK: Yes, over at the Getchell Mill. And my dad was foreman of the mines. They were working about 150 men here then, between the powerhouse, the mines, and the mill. They were working at the Prince Mine, the Link Mine, the Rex, the Colorado Grande, and the Grant on the Getchell property. There was a company. They never did any work for any of these mines up the

canyon, like Miners Gold or that. They just stayed with their own ground.

Anyhow, it was a pretty good camp. We had electricity in camp then. They had an electric line that ran from the powerhouse to Midas and anyplace that wanted electricity. (They didn't have it up your way.) They had it up as far as . . . the dance hall was about as far as they had any electricity. They had three big diesel engines in the powerhouse. One was an old Dow engine. It was a big, four-cylinder diesel that came out of a World War I ship. They also had a big, four-cylinder Fairbanks Morris diesel. And then they had a two-cylinder Fairbanks Morris diesel that was a standby. The mill capacity was a fifty-ton mill, but they used to run about seventy-five tons through it. Then in 1935 they started working the dumps. That was for Prince and the Link. They hauled all that down here to the mill and milled it. Anything that ran around 8,000 ton, why, they hauled that . . .

GAYNELL KELLER [GK]: Honey, excuse me, but was it while you were working down there in the 1930s that you had your pipe story? I thought that was a pretty good



Joe Keller, 1998.

story. And then, also tell her about where you lived and how far you walked and about your little Chevy and all the deep snow and your shiny boot and the shiny car from the snow and all that.

JK: Well, it was 1935 and 1936 that we had, oh, it was about five feet of snow right downtown here [in Midas]. And I was living up there where Rogers lives now. Of course, they've remodeled that since then. And I used to walk from there over to the mill. I was working graveyard at that time.

In 1935 I was working in the mill there on day shift. I smoked a pipe then, and it dropped out of my pocket and dropped into the number one cyanide thickener. Then it went from there to the pulp pump that had big round balls in it . . . into the number one agitator; and then back into the number two thickener and into the number two agitator; and the number three thickener and the

number three agitator; and then the number four thickener. From that area, it went over this big, powerful press that was maybe about ten feet in diameter and about twelve to fourteen feet long. And that sucked all the cyanide solution back out, which was pumped back up into a cyanide tank and was reworked back through the mill again, so there was very little loss of cyanide when they dumped the tails [tailings]. But anyhow, about six weeks later I was on graveyard shift, and I was standing down there by the rake filter, and here comes my pipe! I cleaned that pipe up, and that was the best-tasting pipe I ever had! [laughter] I mean, it's kind of funny how you could lose it, and then be standing there at the right spot when it came over.

So it just kept going back through the cycle?

JK: Yes. After all these pulp pumps . . . but those kind of pumps weren't like a centrifugal pump. It would wind up, they'd just pull this pulp up, then the ball would drop down and shut it off until it made another concentric circle, and then it'd come up again, and that's the way it transferred it from one tank to the other. But it [the pipe] went through all that stuff. And then those thickeners, they had rakes in them that turned real slow, and the agitators had rakes in them that turned pretty fast. So it went all through all that stuff and came out in one piece.

And then, I was telling her the story yesterday about the time we shoveled the road out around the grade here. Do you want me to tell you that again?

Sure.

JK: During that big snow of 1935 and 1936, the powerhouse was about out of diesel oil. A truck was on the way. They took the whole crew from the mine and the mill

and powerhouse and shoveled the road out around the grade and down to Spring Creek. There was about twenty feet of snow right out here that had drifted around the grade. We cleaned all the road between here and Spring Creek. We got it open, and they got the diesel oil truck in and back out that same night after they unloaded the truck. Then the next morning the road was all blown full again.

Oh, gee. So there really wasn't much going back and forth in the wintertime then, was there?

JK: No, we were snowed in for six weeks that winter.

Oh, no mail, supplies?

JK: Of course, we didn't have snowmobiles or anything like that back in those days. It would have been pretty handy to have them.

There were quite a few characters around here about that time. There was Kiyi, a little Italian guy who was always pretending to shoot up everything. He'd been in World War I . . . always shooting up something He was quite a little character. He just mostly leased around here. He never worked for anybody. He just worked spots and leased and ran it through the mill. He and Gordon Young, I believe, did quite a bit of leasing together. And then, Hungry Joe. He was a Hungarian, that's why they called him that. He was a big, slow-talking guy, and he was another character. Then Charlie Standy and Harry Lauretsen were the truckdrivers. They had those little trucks with the hard rubber tires on then—they didn't have pneumatic tires in those days. They'd bring the pulp from Golconda up here or diesel or timber or whatever equipment that was needed. And I guess somebody told you the story about Tamale Dick.

About him shooting his best friend? Yes, I think Edie did. Well, how did they get these names? Like Tamale Dick, how did he get his name?

JK: Well, I can't tell you how he got his name. A name like Shorty Scandy and Hungry Joe and Harry Swanson . . . that was their regular name. But like Kiyi, he was always yakking, and that's why they called him Kiyi, I guess. But his real name was . . . I don't think anybody ever knew what his real name was, but he was just always Kiyi.

GK: And like Shorty was too short. And Tamale Dick—whether that was his real name or whether he just liked to eat a lot of tamales, or whatever it was. Why they called him Tamale Dick, I don't know. But that's the name he always went by.

So you came here to live with your father?

JK: My father, my mother, my brother. And then towards the end, just before World War II, why, they shut down everything. All the gold mines and everything were shut down all over the country. Then an outfit came in and bought the mill and the powerhouse and junked it all out.

GK: Was that when you went over to work at Getchell Mine?

JK: Yes. That's where I learned to weld. I worked in the maintenance shop.

So you were here from 1939?

JK: From 1932. Then my first wife [Fran], who was Lorie's sister and is dead now, was raised right here where we live now [in Midas]. Her father was justice of the peace and was a barber here. He had the mining ground up the canyon that I have now. Then I left here in 1938 and went to work at Getchell. From there I went to

Crescent Mills, California. Then I came back up, and that's when Fran and I were married, in 1940.

My brother was a blacksmith here in Midas for the mines. He worked for my dad, who was mine foreman.

Well, how old were you when you moved here?

JK: When I came here in 1932 I was sixteen years old.

Oh, you'd already finished your school?

JK: No, I graduated from school in Fallon in 1934. But I worked up here with my dad, leasing, of course, when I came up here in the summers of 1932 and 1933. But it was after I graduated from high school that I worked in the mill. That was in 1934 and 1935 and 1936.

Well, then after 1934, I was up here all the time until I went to work at Getchell Mine. I worked at Getchell in 1937 and 1938.

What brought your dad to Midas?

JK: Well, see, that was during the Depression times, and the best places to work at that time were around the mines, because the pay was better and it was steadier work. My dad had been a miner all his life. We just happened to end up here, that's all. Mines were the best places to work during Depression times. There was quite a turnover of men, because there were men coming in all the time from different mines around the country. They were kind of a transient bunch anyhow, most of the old miners were. They'd stay in a place a little while, then they'd move on to another mine.

What do you remember the most about living here?

JK: We used to have a lot of fun here. We had good dances up here at the dance hall. We had ball teams, played ball.

Where would you be playing ball?

JK: We had ball diamonds where we used to practice up here, right there across from where Kirby lives. But we had a ball diamond down by the Squaw Valley gate, where you turn to go into Squaw Valley.

Oh, that far away?

JK: They have a gravel pit down there now where we used to play. Yes, we had a backstop up there, and we had a pretty good little ball diamond. But we worked there seven days a week, so we didn't have a lot of time to play ball.

GK: You were working shift work, too. That made a difference.

JK: Yes. We worked shift work—six weeks of day shift, six weeks of afternoon shift. Seven days a week in the mill, because they have to keep that going. Miners didn't get seven days a week, but the mill crew had to and the powerhouse, because they had to keep all that stuff running twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. But we had a lot of fun here. We'd go fishing and sage-hen hunting over at Scraper Springs. There were so many sage hens, just like going in a chicken coop to shoot them. And fishing—every place you went, you'd catch lots of fish at that time. Oh, we had enough things to do to keep us pretty busy all the time. We'd walk over to Little Humboldt [river] to go fishing.

That's a hike!

JK: We'd go up the canyon to Oregon Canyon and go down to the meadow from there to go fishing sometimes.

Was that the most common means of transportation, your feet? Or did people have horses?

JK: Oh, we had old cars, but the old cars in those days . . . you know, the roads were bad, and just a lot of flat tires.

GK: Didn't have four-wheel drive in those days.

JK: After World War II, my brother, Bob, and I came up here hunting. Deer hunting was real good over the area. My brother had this big, one-ton Studebaker pickup. I think that was the first two-wheel drive pickup that ever went over that hill. But we put a lot of rock in the back of it to get over there. Then later, when four-wheel drives came out, why, it was nothing. Just like going over Scraper Spring for sage hens. The roads weren't that bad then. Fact is, they weren't any worse then than they are now.

Did your dad stay here through the war, or did he leave when the mines were closed down?

JK: No, he left. They had shut the mines down here when they started hauling the dumps down to the mill. And then he left here in 1937.

Oh, before you did?

JK: Yes, and I stayed here. I was still working at the mill, then I went to work at Getchell Mine in 1938. But he was here from 1932 to 1937. And then, my brother and I and Mother would go back to Fallon where we were going to high school. He'd stay up here and come home once in a while.

How many other people would you say were here then?

JK: Well, there was about 200 all together, counting families and all. But we had all kinds of fun. I think we probably had more fun then than ever since. We used to have real good dances up here. When I first came up here, I'd never go to dances. I never paid any attention to girls, and I never went to dances until after I got out of high school in 1934. Then I started going to the dances. But their dances would last all night long. Maybe we'd go to Battle Mountain—they'd have dances—and Tuscarora and places like that. But we just had a lot of fun, that's all.

GK: You could tell her a little bit about your courtship of Fran. Well, that's a personal story.

JK: Oh, that! No, no. That's a different story. That's not interesting to anybody.

Oh, you'd be surprised what we historians are interested in! Did you meet her at one of the dances up here?

JK: No. I was living here. She was living down there. Started kind of going together. Then Lorie, she was a little older than Fran . . . They had two other sisters, but they were all born and married right here in Midas. But they came here, I think, *her* dad and mother came here in 1908.

Right in the beginning [of the Midas mining boom]?

JK: Yes.

I think I've seen his name in the papers. I have a 1908 paper.

GK: Macy's, huh?

JK: That's when they had the tent camp here.

GK: What was his first name? Fran's dad?

JK: Frank Macy. You ever have pictures of the old tent camp that used to be down here?

At Summit? Not very good pictures.

JK: Yes. I still have some pictures of that at home.

Now, I'm having a hard time placing Summit. Was it just over this hill here?

JK: Well, you know where Summit Creek comes down through there? It was down along that creek.

Where it kind of gets flat through there?

JK: Yes. At that time I think Summit Creek all came down into *this* canyon. Then later it was diverted to where it went down in and crosses down there just before . . . came up over the hill. But part of it still comes down here. But that's where they got the name for Summit. I mean, it was Summit, and they called that Summit Creek. But that was probably not quite halfway between here and Spring Creek. That went off in this direction.

Yes, it looked like there was a pretty good tug-of-war between Midas and Summit as to which was going to have the main town.

JK: Yes. But there were quite a few people here at that time. I forget now just how many it was.

GK: Two thousand, I heard.

JK: Something like that.

That's pretty much what the estimates ran. Some real optimistic person put it at 20,000, but I think they're way off.

JK: No, it was never that much. It was more like 2,000, I think, would have been pretty close.

GK: Edie has more pictures.

She just gave me a whole slew to copy.

GK: Oh, did she?

JK: And the original strike of Midas was at the Bamberger up there.

And where's that?

JK: That's on the ground I have up there. I have the old, original Macy ground, which was right across the canyon there from Miners Gold. And then, I have [claims] over on Water Canyon. I have what they called the "Champion" then. I don't call it that anymore. That's for Dempsey and his work. And the Bamberger belonged to Mrs. Purdy in later years, but it was discovered by a Bamberger, and it was real rich. They took, oh, right off the top of the ground there in little potholes that ran about \$25,000 a ton.

[whistles]

JK: And that's when gold was \$20 an ounce, and silver was about 60 cents an ounce. Today . . .

That'd be a fortune.

JK: Yes, probably real good ore. But that was the original discovery at Midas, right there. Then the biggest mine up here was the Elko Prince Mine. It produced about \$6 million.

Yes, and that's the one over there.

JK: That's the one up there. And that was Mr. Ehlers, is the one that ran the tunnel in there and hit *that* vein. And then, they had the Elko Prince up there, but that wasn't running anymore when I came here. That burned down, and so that stopped that. But that was awful good ore from that Elko Prince . . . because I looked through a bunch of the old mill sheets that they had down at this mill, one that came from that mill. Every sheet I looked through was running around \$50, \$60 a pound, which was good ore—real high-grade ore today. Then the Ehlerses, they owned this in here where Ron is now.

The restaurants used to be right there. Then later, when the company was running over here, why, the people that ran the restaurant, that was . . . Eckman, Mrs. Eckman—Florine. Noreen and Fran used to work over there and waited on tables.

GK: It was a boardinghouse.

What do you think ever happened to those mill sheets?

JK: Oh, crimine, hard to tell whatever happened to them, because they belonged to the company, really, so they had them. But whatever happened to them . . . Not even here anymore. All that stuff, when they started tearing things down right there and chucking it out . . .

Were there any newspapers being published here when you were here?

JK: No, I don't know of any newspaper that was published up here. Might have been in earlier days, but there wasn't any when I was up here.

Was mail still coming in daily?

JK: Well, the mail *used* to come in three times a week when I was up here. Came in Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. And the people that had the mail route then, when I was here, his name was True. Mrs. True, she's the one that always delivered the mail. They just came in three times a week.

GK: Well, didn't [someone] tell us that they brought mail up from Battle Mountain part of the time?

JK: I think that was before I was here. And I think Trues had that, too, that it came in from Battle Mountain instead of Golconda.

GK: And they used the old roads, huh?

JK: Yes.

How many people do you think are buried in the cemetery?

JK: Well, they were telling me more about that down there yesterday. I don't know. All I know is what they were saying. They said, what, about fifteen? But I know there used to be quite a few markers over there, and that was it. So I couldn't tell you that.

Was there a road that came off of that road there, down to the cemetery? Because I know now we can't even get the motorcycles in there. We have to park and walk in.

JK: Well, the road that used to go to the cemetery was . . . You see the old road that goes around the hill here and goes over to the powerhouse?

Right.

JK: There was a road that went up from that, that went up to the cemetery then. It was just more like kind of a wagon road. But you can't get through there now?

It's been a couple of years since I've been up there, but we couldn't get the bikes in there.

JK: Too rough?

Well, with three wheels it's kind of rough.

JK: Too sagebrushy.

Yes. Two-wheelers could probably, if you were a good rider.

JK: Three wheels don't fit in the sagebrush.

Not unless it's low. It's got to be really low.

JK: But it's not very far up there from the road, to walk up there.

No, it really isn't.

JK: I haven't been over to that cemetery for years.

I was just talking to Edie about that, and I've only seen three markers up there. She said she's seen more, so I'm going to go poke around, see what I can find.

JK: But most of them were wooden markers. Like I was saying yesterday, most of them have rotted away and deteriorated.

Do you remember ever seeing a funeral up here?

JK: No. When I was up here, they weren't burying anybody over there that I know of. Most of them were being buried in Winnemucca and Battle Mountain, or someplace where they had funeral homes

and stuff like that. No, I don't remember that I've ever seen a funeral here. If there was, I didn't pay much attention to it. I was working and didn't know about it. But I don't know any of the people that were buried there. Or I *didn't* know any of them.

Where was a popular hangout place for the kids, for people about your age, sixteen, eighteen?

JK: Well, the biggest thing that we had was right over here in front of Primeaux's Store. And that was right across from over here. (You know where that was.) And there was a light out in front there, and we'd all congregate there after we'd get done playing ball. And that was the main arena; that's where we ended up.

Any particular reason, or just . . . because.

JK: Well, we had benches out in front there. We'd sit down. And the bar was up there, but we never went in the bar—didn't let kids in the bar.

GK: Did you have soda pop or eat or drink anything while you were there?

JK: Oh, just soda pop once in a while, for a nickel.

Did Primeaux have a soda fountain, or was it the bottled?

JK: Bottled.

For a nickel! Tell that to Kirby! [laughter]

JK: Well, that's when I could get a nickel, and a candy bar was about that long then. It's probably about thirty-five, forty cents now. But Primeaux had pretty near a little of everything in there: he had Levis and groceries and pocket watches. A pocket watch would cost you a dollar then. A pair of

Levis cost you a dollar then. Gasoline, I think, at the pump there . . . still the old same pump that Kirby's got up there. I think it is. It looks like the same pump. I think we used to pay twenty cents a gallon for gasoline.

Now, was Bamberger himself still here when you got here?

JK: No, he was gone from here.

There's a story about him [that] I'm trying to hunt down, and I'm not having much luck.

JK: It's too bad Mrs. Purdy isn't still alive. She could have told you more stories about this camp than anybody.

Now, where did she live?

JK: She lived, well, up there below where Sabins live, between there and Gordon's.

That house that was torn out?

JK: The house that belonged to Birds? It was a family by the name of Birds lived there first.

GK: Berg.

JK: Berg, yes. And then she moved down here, probably about 1936 or 1937, I think, when she moved into this old house over here.

GK: Right across the street there, between Edith and Kirby's . . .

JK: Almost just like a shingle roof that slopes in. That's where she lived. And her husband, Mr. Purdy, was the one that had quite a bit to do with running that long tunnel in up there that they run in under

that Bamberger property . . . eight hundred feet. And then Gordon Warren's dad, he was the one that run the company up there at the Miners Gold. He started that. And then he had a store here, too, you know. And then there was a big warehouse above his store. The store was right next to this place. And that's a big oak in the back, and they had the store in the front. They had that big warehouse up there, and then this house here that was Macy's. And they had that big fire that came down through here. I guess you know about that.

Yes, the schoolteacher's place that burned.

JK: Yes, that started that. I can't tell you exactly what year it was, but it was about twenty-four or five years ago when that burned down. And that was in the middle of wintertime, and I've heard different stories of how much dynamite was stored in there—anywhere from one crate or case to five or six cases, but I would say it wasn't over two or three at the most. And there was snow all over the ground, and that dynamite went off, and I guess it blew a pick over Andy. He was running the bar over there. Mr. Sabin and Andy had just walked across the street when that dynamite went off. It blew a pick over Mr. Sabin's head. The concussion of the blast knocked Andy down. He said if it hadn't knocked him down, it would have killed him instead of just going right over his head. And then that's what brought all this out in here. And the old house is getting pretty rickety anyhow, so it was a good way of getting it out of here, I guess.

GK: Did you tell her anything about the Browns?

JK: Oh, she's probably heard about the Browns.

Not really very much.

GK: He lived up there in one of the cabins.

JK: Just above where you live. Their place is there.

Yes.

JK: Well, him and Mrs. Brown—he was quite a character, Mr. Brown was. He always was kind of a handyman, and he got a little job from somebody, he'd say, "Three dollars a day for me, and a \$1.50 or \$1.75 (whatever it was) for the old lady." And the old lady did more work than he ever did! She'd do all the work, but he always had his price for two dollars a day. And she worked for \$1.50 or \$1.75. But they had a real neat-looking place in there. That was always beautiful up there with the trees and that—little cabins. I lived in pretty near every one of those cabins at different times when I was up there.

So all those little separate buildings that are up there in that little tiny canyon, they just lived in one of them?

JK: They lived in the big house down there. They had that fixed up pretty nice. And then they had these little cabins that they rented up there. And then they owned the one where Elgeses live now. And I lived in that house there, too, one winter. My brother that worked in the powerhouse, and they danced up there that one year.

But they were nice, old people and kept everything nice and neat and clean. Had a little fruit in the yard that she'd pick up every morning. Then she'd take that in and set it there by her stove to start her wood stove with in the morning. It was real neat there, but it's sure gone to pot now.

Did they come up here for him to mine?

JK: Well, actually, he never did any mining. All he had was a little hole that was dug up there—that one that your dad opened up last year or had Mike open up. He run that little tunnel, and that one across the canyon from there, where that bunk is there. But see, that wasn't on lots. That was mining claim ground, and he had to do that work every year for his assessment to hold the building. See, nowadays, you can't put a building on a mining claim and do that, but back then you could. But he never did any mining around here that I know of unless he did it before I came here. But they were here a long time before I came. But he never worked in any mines after I came here. He done little things—like I say, just handyman and mechanical work on that shop down this way.

GK: Have you talked to Mrs. Sabin?

Not yet. I'm running out of tapes, and Bev's supposed to bring me some tonight, so I've been trying to . . . I'm going to interview her, and Gordon, too, should be capable to talk about Saturday.

JK: Yes, Gordon, he was raised here, too.

He's one I really need to talk to.

JK: You're collecting stories from everybody. How are you going to put them together? [laughter]

They don't conflict that much. You'd be surprised about how well some of them really mesh. It's like somebody will remember the date, and someone else will remember the person's name. Eventually, they come together.

GK: I think it was interesting that you kids used to, when they had the Fourth of July things, and they had all those games

and sack races and stuff . . . Byron and Joe were running a sack race together, you know. Can you make any more of a story out of it than that?

JK: Well, they used to have some real Fourth of July deals here. I can't think of the man's name now that come in, that bought the Miners Gold. He was from Utah, and he had a lot of money. And that one Fourth of July up here he put up a lot of money, and then they had preparations down in the street, and all us kids were there. And the younger men made quite a little bit of money.

Oh, really?

JK: Every time you won a race, you'd get a little bit of money, a *lot* of money. Don't sound like much now. I think I won about five or six dollars that one Fourth of July, which was a lot of money.

Yes.

JK: And you know, Gordon used to be a pretty good athlete. He was quite a hurdle jumper and a high jumper there when he went to high school in Elko. And he was racing, and Byron, all us kids—we had a pretty good time.

Do you remember anything else about any of the other holidays? Was there a big hoopla made, say, around Christmas or something? Or was it mostly the Fourth of July?

JK: Well, Fourth of July and Labor Day was always pretty good. But Christmastime, they'd have a Christmas tree up at the dance hall up there and presents for the kids and all that stuff, and everybody would go up there, and they'd probably end up afterwards with a dance or something. But that was right in the middle of wintertime.

There used to be a lot of snow here every winter then—a lot more than, I'll tell you, the last couple of years. Lately they haven't had too much snow up here, but we always had a lot of snow up here back then.

Mostly did you sled off of Midas Mountain, or was it this area?

JK: When we'd sleigh ride?

Yes.

JK: See, the schoolteacher's house used to be up on the hill over in here. And then, where that road still goes up back of Kirby's and up over the hill, that's where we did most all our sleigh riding, was down there. Of course, when that snow got crusted and everything, then you could go all over these hills, but most of the time we did most of our sleigh riding over there.

What was the grandest house in Midas? Was there one house that everybody just thought was the neatest house? Or did most everybody's house look the same?

JK: Well, Getchell's house down here by the office, that was a nice house. That was probably the nicest house of the whole bunch. But Mrs. Jacobson's house, that old lady I was telling [about] yesterday that came to visit us last summer, was over in here, and there was trees over there. That was a real nice house.

The building that's still standing, was that her garage then? The one that looks like it's just about on its last legs.

JK: That old tin shed over there, you mean? No.

No, up a little higher. Up by the schoolhouse.

GK: The one that's right behind Bev's house?

Yes.

JK: No, I don't think that was her shed.

Oh, OK. She was down farther towards the road?

GK: She was right back there in that grove of trees, you know, behind Grass Valley people.

Oh, there. OK. That nice little flat area.

JK: Yes. And then Primeaux's house back then was a pretty nice house.

Yes, the pictures of it sure are.

GK: Did all of them have these flat storefronts?

JK: No, no. Jacobson's house had a gable roof on it, and it was a pretty nice house. And the Bergs' house, up here where I told you Mrs. Purdy lived, was a pretty nice house back then.

Oh, I loved that house. Killed me when they tore it down, even though it was falling apart.

JK: And we lived in *that* house at one time, too. Well, see, when we'd take and go back to school, when my dad wouldn't keep the big house we lived in, and he'd get a little cabin or something. And when we'd come back up the next summer, why, then we'd rent another house. That's how come we lived in so many different houses.

I see.

JK: And let's see, [what] others? Actually, the old Wilkerson house down

there wasn't a bad old house back then, you know. It still is standing pretty good compared to some houses.

GK: The green house?

JK: Yes.

Yes, that is a nice house.

GK: Well, that was Mrs. Jacobson's house, . . . a house bigger than that?

JK: No, Mrs. Jacobson's house was a pretty good-sized house. And then Herb Thompson had one of the nicer houses up here, I always thought, but it's gone. That's where Phil Hartzler lived. He had a big, white house in there. And I'd say probably next to Jacob's house, that would have been the nicest one

GK: What was Getchell's house like?

JK: See, when I came over here in 1928 from Cortez with my folks, my uncle was superintendent over here then.

What was your uncle's name?

JK: Joe Engelbreit.

Somebody asked me that the other day, so I thought I'd better ask you.

JK: And, actually, he was married to my mother's sister. We always called him an uncle, but she was my aunt. And they lived in Getchell's house down here. We stayed there for a couple of days before we went back to Cortez, and that was the only time I ever remember ever being in *that* house.

GK: Did it have a big front porch or anything like that?

JK: Well, most all of them had porches. And that had a porch on it that kind of stepped out over the creek, and the creek kind of run underneath it down there at that time.

GK: That was kind of neat.

Yes. Tim said that house is still standing in Winnemucca.

JK: Yes, they moved it out of here.

So Dad and I are going hunting, see if we can find it.

JK: And I don't know whether it was ever moved—Mrs. Jacobson's house—out of here or not. I don't know what happened to it.

GK: I know they moved some of the houses from Betty O'Neal down to Battle Mountain that are still standing.

JK: But actually there wasn't too many of them that was built that you could move, outside of Getchell's house. And I think the one the Jacobsons had could have been moved. I think it was well enough built. And Herb Thompson's house—I don't know just what happened to it. It wasn't moved out of here. Whether somebody tore it down, whether Ron did or what. That was still there, I think, when Hartzler . . . Did you ever talk to Hartzler?

Not yet.

JK: I don't know whether that was still there when he took over that place or not. I couldn't tell you. See, a lot of this stuff, after I quit working here and then went to Getchell, and then I was in California . . . In 1950 my brother and I took over the Macy plant up here, because they couldn't handle it anymore. Then all we did is come up here

every summer for a couple of weeks and do our assessment work. Then we'd be gone, working out of town all the time. So there was just a lot of the time I wasn't around here when a lot of this stuff took place.

What do you remember about the red light district? When you got here, had it already moved up the street?

JK: It was up to the old rock house when I was here.

The one that burned down a few years ago?

JK: The one that burned down, yes.

Was it just that one house, or were there more?

JK: Well, I never was around here, I didn't pay any attention to it. But it was just the one house, as far as I can remember. Gordon can tell you more about that.

Ruby was from Tuscarora, though, wasn't she?

JK: Ruby was from here.

Oh, she was from Midas?

JK: Boy, I'll tell you, she was a red light girl, Ruby was.

I knew she was that, but I thought she was out of Tuscarora.

JK: She may have come from Tuscarora over here, but I think she was up here when I was working over here in the mill. But Gordon can tell you more about that than I can. I can tell you about the night it burned down.

Oh yes, tell me about that.

JK: Well, we'd just gone to bed, and I told Gaynell, "I smell smoke. It smells like sagebrush burning." Then I looked out the window of the trailer, and I could see that big glow up there, and I said, "We got to get up there. There's a fire up there." So I got up and got dressed, and Ron and Doris had been up the canyon spotting deer with the spotlight on their Jeep that night. They saw the glow, and they came down by there, and they got up to Sabin's about the same time we did. Then they got the fire truck a going and got up there, and we had—I know there was DeLong, and there was . . .

GK: Everybody in Midas.

JK: Except Hartzler and Gordon—he wasn't in shape to go up. Everybody that was here went up there. And then the wind was a blowing down that canyon about forty mile an hour, it seemed like, wasn't it?

GK: Yes.

JK: And it was carrying sparks down through here about 300 to 400 feet. Anyhow, we got it contained.

GK: Mrs. Sabin got on the telephone.

JK: And called Elko, and they sent fire engines up there and got a hold of Winnemucca, and they came out here . . . about what?

GK: One o'clock they got here, and the fire had started about nine.

JK: We had it all contained when they got here. But there was about how many fire engines came in?

GK: There were about thirteen.

Oh, gee!

GK: Yes. And they all stayed until, I've forgotten whether it was three o'clock or four o'clock in the morning, but they stayed until it was all out. And these guys, when they came, why, they came home.

JK: They were lined up all the way down the street.

GK: Yes, they stopped and were waiting till everybody came, and they left like in a caravan, and I counted them as they went down the road, and there were thirteen fire engines and different other vehicles.

JK: But they had lots of water on *those* rigs, and all we had for water was that little one of Sabin's. [So we fought it] with shovels and everything, and the sparks would come down, so it couldn't get down the canyon.

It's a wonder Unger's place [didn't catch fire].

GK: Oh, it is!

JK: But that wind was really blowing that night. I didn't think we had a chance of saving the camp.

GK: Then it smoldered for a week, with all those ties.

JK: Ties that were up there.

Yes, we came up the week after and saw it smoldering.

JK: I remember the one thing . . . the people that owned that place, I guess it was their daughter, wasn't it?

GK: Yes.

JK: Well, anyhow, we got rid of the rats.

Oh, that place was so bad with rats and mice!

JK: But I remember she was telling you, I guess.

GK: Yes. Well, Kirby was up there, you know, and this lady (I forget her name right now. Do you know?)

I can't think of the name of the people that owned [that place].

GK: Seemed to me it was Mac-something. Jim?

JK: He tended bar for Kirby lots of times. He was a big guy.

GK: But anyway, I had ridden up with Doris in their little Jeep? You did, too, didn't you, Joe? Didn't we both ride up there with them?

JK: Yes.

GK: So anyway, we were standing there, and Kirby brought this lady over to us and asked Doris if she'd take her down to the bar. You know, it was all closed up and everything. Nobody was there. And so we came down, and we just were sitting there drinking water and kind of talking. And this lady said, "Well, at least we got rid of the rats."

And a little girl said, "Yes, but it burned up my new shoes!" [laughter] Well, and her husband had some kind of a commercial fishing business up in Alaska, and he was up there at that time. So the girl and her mother were up here alone. And they'd *just* come up, you know. And they'd gone down to Kirby's, and it happened while they were down there—just kind of blew up.

Anyway, she didn't seem to feel a bit bad about it. She said, "Well, maybe now we can

go to Reno and see a floor show instead of having to come up here to Midas all the time!" [laughter]

Oh, gee! Well, this tape's about over.

JK: Well, I think you got about all the information, and a lot of it that won't do you any good.

Oh no, all of it is valuable!

GK: You just didn't know how valuable your information was!

Oh, were you here when they repealed Prohibition?

JK: No, I was in town.

I'd like to hear about that part of it.

JK: Maybe Dad [was here]. That was in 1932.

You must have just missed it.

JK: That didn't mean anything up here anyhow, because most all the whiskey that come in here kept coming in from bootleggers anyhow. They didn't pay any attention to it.

Yes, that's probably true. Did it seem like towns like Midas didn't get hit by the Depression as hard as some other places?

JK: Oh no. No, all the mining camps that were running was a lot better off during the Depression.

Oh, they were?

JK: Yes. When I worked in the mill over here, I was getting \$4.50 a day, and that was darned good money. Most places, like

down in Fallon and Lovelock and all the places around

How come the mining camps were better off during the Depression than other places?

JK: Well, because they were making more money around. The mines were doing pretty good, you see. It just was a better place to work. I was going to say, Fallon, and all those areas, it's mostly all farming areas, and farm crops weren't worth much money, and those guys were working down in those places for a dollar a day. And here I was, just a kid, and I was getting \$4.50 up here, and my dad, I think, when he was foreman up here at the mine, he was getting around \$7.00 or \$8.00 a day, which was pretty good money back [then]. So they were doing a lot better. And then Getchell Mine was started up, and they were hiring. They had quite a few men working over there. There was people flocking in from every state in the union, trying to get jobs around the mine.

So were there a lot of hobos that came through here?

JK: Well, I wouldn't call them hobos. They were transient miners. Like I say, they'd work in one place for a little while and get tired of it and go on to another one, because a good miner, even back then, even if there's a lot of guys looking for work, they were always looking for the *good* miners—the guys that knew mining. A lot of these guys that were coming in had never worked in mines before. They were just coming for a job.

I know my dad hired one guy that was here. He was [working] over at the Link Mine, up on top, where they bring the ore up out of the shaft and dump it into the mine car. Then they pushed it over, dumped it down into this ore bin, and then it went from

there over to the mill on a little train. It wasn't a train, it was just a bunch of mine cars with a motorized car in front that You could probably see where the old track went around over there, if you knew where it was. I mean, I know where it is. Anyhow, this guy here, those cars, you dump them, and they got a trip lever on them, and you dump them down the chute. And so he grabbed a shovel out there on the dump, and he was mucking it out from the top down the chute. And then another one, he had those carbide lamps that they used then, and he had the carbide that went in the bottom, and the water would go in the top and feed down into the carbide. He put the carbide in the top and the water in the bottom. I mean, they'd say they'd worked around mines so they could get a job, but it was just a lot of those kind of people. But the *good* miners, they didn't have trouble, they could move around, and they worked fine.



(The rest of the Keller oral history consists of an interview Victoria Ford conducted with Joe Keller, with Gaynell Keller present, on July 8, 1998. Ms. Ford's questions are in italics, while Mr. Keller's answers are in regular type. Joe Keller was not in good health at the time of this interview, so the interview was kept brief and focused on his mining and milling experience in Midas.)

VICTORIA FORD: *Today is July 8, 1998. I'm here in Fallon with Joe Keller and his wife, Gaynell. We're going to be talking about Midas. Joe, let's start and talk a little bit about your dad. You said that he was the foreman. What was he the foreman of?*

JK: Mining foreman.

Of which mine?

JK: Elko Prince and Grant and the Link.

All at the same time or at different times?

JK: Well, along a period of two or three years.

And so when he was superintendent, did you live there in Midas?

JK: We had a place up there.

Did you also live in Fallon at that time?

JK: I lived mostly at Midas at that time.

OK. And did you go to school there?

JK: No.

This would have been after . . . ?

JK: After I graduated from school here [in Fallon].

I see, OK. So how old were you when you first went up there with your dad?

JK: Oh, I was about twenty-two or twenty-three.

When you were in high school what happened up there?

JK: Well, my dad was leasing two or three properties up there, and I'd go up there and work with him in the summertime and help him.

And what did he have you doing when you were helping your dad?

JK: Oh, I was on windlass and mucking—a little of everything.

You were working on the windlass? What is that?

JK: Well, when you're working down in the shaft a ways, you've got this windlass with a big handle crank out here and a cable line, and that pulls the bucket up out of the mine with the ore in it or waste, whatever you were pulling.

I see, so it was pretty much a small, hand operation that he was doing, just the two of you?

JK: Yes.

So you were on the windlass, or you were mucking. What else did he have you doing?

JK: Oh, anything that just come along—digging trenches or a little of everything.

Did you learn anything about working with the dynamite as a teenager?

JK: Yes. Yes, and then later years when I went back up, when I was working up there for myself after World War II, I run a tunnel in there for about five hundred feet. And I had to do the blasting and mucking and everything in that.

And what was the name of that mine after World War II that you worked?

JK: That was the Dempsey. You know, Jack Dempsey [famous boxer] used to be up here.

Right.

JK: He had a ring down there in Midas, and he'd go down there and do his stuff at the ring, and then he'd run up to the mine.

And one of the mines I had was the Dempsey Mine.

OK, so you worked on that after World War II? And you did all the blasting and everything?

JK: Everything, yes.

So you spent summers up there helping your dad. Did your dad stay up there year-round?

JK: Yes, he did, until we shut the mine down. When they shut it down, he went to Crescent Mills, California.

So he was leasing, and he was working for these other big mine operations?

JK: Yes, that was the company mine he was working.

So he did both? Or was it at different times?

JK: Well, then I went to work in the mill. Ray Clawson was the mill foreman at that time.

And that's the Getchell Mill?

JK: Yes. You've probably heard of Ray Clawson.

I've read his name, but I don't know much about him. He was the mill foreman?

JK: Yes. And then when they were closing the mill down there in Midas is when I went to Getchell Mine. [Note: Getchell Mine is located thirty-five miles west of Midas.]

I see. So you had experience in both milling and mining?

JK: Yes.

Did you work underground at the Getchell Mine?

JK: No, I worked in the maintenance shop.

What did you do there?

JK: Mostly welding. That's where I learned to weld.

Like what kinds of things would you be welding? Was it on equipment?

JK: It was on equipment or anything that was broke down, why, you'd have to go in and fix it. And that big roasting plant that they put in, it killed all the dogs and cats in camp off that one winter. You see, that stuff would come down like snowflakes and then get in the snow, and then the animals would eat it, and it'd kill them.

You said that was arsenic coming out of that roasting plant? And this would have been during the Depression, is that right?

JK: That's right.

So was this a pretty good job for Depression years?

JK: It was a good place to work in the Depression times. We made more money, better money than most any place at that time.

Do you remember what your wages were?

JK: About five dollars a day, which was good wages back then. Mill was a little higher than the mine. You had to work shift work at the mill. The mine was mostly day shift.

They didn't work nights or weekends?

JK: Not very often.

How big was that Getchell Mill?

JK: That was a fifty-ton mill, but we used to put about sixty, sixty-five tons through it. That was a pretty good little mill.

What kind of mill was it?

JK: Cyanide mill.

Is that up where that new operation is at the Sleeping Beauty?

JK: No. The Sleeping Beauty was down below town.

OK, right. Yes, it's down and around the corner.

JK: Around the corner there, yes.

Where was the Getchell Mill located?

JK: You know where the powerhouse was there, the old foundation for the powerhouse?

Yes.

JK: Well, they were pretty close together there. Still some of the old foundations from the mill was left there the last time I was down by there.

You could still see it? Was the powerhouse connected? Was that part of the mill?

JK: No, it was separate from the mill, where they generated the electricity for the mill.

Was that all part of Getchell's operation?

JK: Right, that was part of the operation.

What kind of power was it?

JK: Diesel electric.

Do you remember what the diesel engines were, what brand?

JK: One was a Fairbanks Morris. They were all Fairbanks Morris, but one of them was an older one. It was a lot smaller one. That was pretty handy to start up for when you didn't need a lot of electricity. And the big ones were four-cylinder, and that was a two-cylinder one.

I see. So they used the four-cylinder ones most of the time?

JK: Yes, when we were running the whole plant.

Did you ever end up having to work on those?

JK: No. I worked on everything in the mill, but I didn't work on anything in the powerhouse.

So the mill operated in shifts. As a welder, did you have to do shift work, too?

JK: Well, I didn't weld there at Midas. I welded at Getchell. That was before I started welding—when I was at Midas.

[tape turned off and on] OK, we stopped for just a minute, because I was confused about a couple of things. One is that you worked at the Getchell Mill in Midas, and then after that closed in 1942, you went and worked at the Getchell Mine, which is not in Midas.

JK: No, that's thirty-five miles from Midas.

And that's where, when you were telling the story about the arsenic . . .

JK: That was over at Getchell [Mine].

So we want to talk a little bit more about your work at the mill in Midas. What was it that you did there?

JK: It was operating the mill. I was an operator.

So you were working with the cyanide?

JK: The cyanide and the whole process. Where it come in through the crusher to where it went out in the tailings.

Can you describe that whole process to me, from the crusher on through?

JK: Yes. It was hauled into the crusher, and it was crushed and went through the ball mill. And then there was what they called a "rod" mill there, too, and that used pebbles that came from Denmark. They were hard pebbles for a real fine grind. They were black pebbles, and they were real hard. The rod mill was about twice as long as the ball mill was, where they got a real fine grain. And then it went from there into a classifier, and that classifier classified it down to about two hundred mesh. From there it went into a thickener, then it went into an agitator, and then it went into another thickener, another agitator; and there was six thickeners in there altogether.

So it went through that process six times? Through a thickener and an agitator?

JK: Yes, and then after it went through the last agitator and went into the tailings, we took the remaining solution out of the material, ran it back through the process again.

Take the cyanide out before it went out in the tailings?

JK: Before it went out in the tailings pond.

And so you were watching that whole process. Did you operate it alone, or were there other men on your shift with you?

JK: No, in daytime there was about two or three guys around, but in the nighttime, there was just one.

So you did shift work there, then?

JK: Yes, I worked on shift work in the mill.

Days and nights?

JK: Yes.

So at night you would have operated the whole thing by yourself?

JK: Yes, until there was a young guy there from the university that got killed up there in the mill. And then after that they had to put two men on a shift.

Oh, really? What happened to the young man from the university?

JK: Well, this ball mill was getting pretty old—the liner—to where you'd have to shut it down and change the liner maybe during a shift. And it had to be cranked like a wheel that went into an electric motor, where you could turn it by hand when they were working on it. Well, he forgot to take the guard rail away from around that, and he started it up—or I imagine he heard that big whir noise of that crank running in the mill that he hadn't taken out, and he walked into that, and it chopped him all up.

Oh! Were you there when that happened?

JK: I was working there but not that night.

Wow. He just walked right into that crank, huh?

JK: Yes. It was a big crank that fit into the hub of that motor, and it had these arms that went out from it. You could get a hold of it to turn by hand when you wanted to turn the mill a little bit.

Was that the only accident that you recall when you were there?

JK: That was the only one in the mill, yes. I didn't know of one anyplace else. I was on the day shift at that time.

So you learned quite a bit about that whole milling process.

JK: [laughter] Yes. That was a good mill. I've always thought that if I ever had to build a mill, I'd like to have one like that. You could make about 96 percent recovery.

Really? Ninety-six percent!

JK: Yes.

What was it about that mill that made it such a good . . . ?

JK: The processes they had to go through with cyanide and this ore.

Was there anything different about this mill than other mills that were being built about that same time in Nevada?

JK: No, there was probably several that was built similar to that. A lot of them were flotation mills. We didn't have any flotation there. We had all cyanide.

I've heard about the ball mills before, but I hadn't heard about a pebble mill. Was that unusual to have both?

JK: No. That was just the one they had for that fine grind, and that was the best way of getting it.

OK. So it was just a really efficient mill.

JK: It was very efficient. We were running quite a few leasers' ore through there at that time, too.

So it wasn't just for his own business. It was the small, custom milling that was being done, too?

JK: Yes.

When you studied at the university, did you study this process?

JK: No, I just learned that by doing it.

You learned it on the job?

JK: Yes.

But you had gone to the university before you went out there?

JK: I had, yes.

How long did you go to the university?

JK: Two-and-a-half years.

What was the reason that you didn't finish all four years?

JK: Well, I had to get out and get to work. I had an aunt that was married to a big mining man in Canada, and she wanted to send me to finish school. I wanted no part of that, I wanted to get out of it. And so I got

out. I wish I had finished! [laughter] At the time, it was the best thing for me to do.

Is there anything else about that time at Midas? When you were at the mill, which mines were open then?

JK: Well, the Link, the Grant, and mostly the Elko Prince.

And when you were at the mill, was your dad still mine foreman at the time?

JK: Yes. He was shipping ore from the Prince at that time to the mill.

He was the foreman then. And did you have a brother that worked up there, too?

JK: Yes. He was a blacksmith.

What was his name?

JK: Robert L. Keller.

Was he older or younger than you?

JK: Younger, fourteen months younger than I am.

What did the blacksmith do? You weren't operating with horses or burros, were you?

JK: No. The blacksmith was sharpening steel for the machines and stuff more than anything else. When I left Getchell Mine, we went to Crescent Mills, [California,] and my brother was there. We went to the World's Fair at that time. [laughter] Then I went back to Midas after that.

Oh, after the World's Fair?

JK: Yes, and the other guy that went with us, that was Twitchell. He worked in the powerhouse at Midas, and he also did at

Getchell Mine. His dad was the foreman at Getchell Mine, had a shop there.

That must have been fun to see that, the World's Fair.

JK: Yes, it was.

Was it in San Francisco?

JK: Yes.

Were you single when you lived in Midas, or were you married?

JK: I was single then, but my future wife lived there, so that's one reason I went back to Midas.

I see. So you were a young, single man. Did you have a boardinghouse or something?

JK: They had a boardinghouse there in Midas. They had one at Getchell Mine, real good one at Getchell Mine.

At Getchell Mine, too. OK, backing up a little bit, we were talking about after World War II [when] you went back up there [to Midas]. And you did what? You had your own properties then?

JK: Actually, they were my father-in-law's¹ and his wife's properties. After they passed away, I took them over and was operating the Dempsey Mine. I forget now just exactly what all ground it was, but it was all the ground that they had, and I took that over and worked it.

And you said they had three or four claims up there?

JK: Yes.

OK. And your father-in-law's name was . . . ?

JK: Frank Macy [Francis Marion Macy].

So these were his claims that you were working?

JK: Yes.

Tell me how you worked those. Were you doing that pretty much by hand, or did you have people helping you?

JK: That was by hand.

When you were working at the Getchell Mill, what kind of production was going on there? Were they making quite a bit of money?

JK: They were running through about 1,200 tons of ore a day there at that time. The Babbitt brothers (used to be road contractors here in Fallon) moved a lot of equipment up there and were hauling ore for Getchell from the mine into the mill.

And what kind of values were they getting? Were they making some good money off of that?

JK: Well, it was not real high-grade ore. It was probably ore that was running around \$6, \$7 a ton, something like that. But when they put 1,200 times \$8, they were making pretty good money.

I see. But this was a seventy-five-ton [mill]?

JK: No, that over at Getchell [mine] was 1,200-ton.

OK. But back over in Midas at the mill, you said that it was a fifty-ton mill, correct?

JK: Yes.

And so they were running fifty or sixty through?

JK: About sixty, seventy through it.

In a day?

JK: Yes.

And what kind of money were they making off of that, do you know?

JK: Well, they were making pretty good money, because they were recovering about 95 percent of everything that went through.

Was it high-grade ore, or was it . . . ?

JK: Ore that went through there, when I was working there, we averaged about thirty, thirty-five dollars a ton. They ran about seventy ton through, so they were making fair money off of it.

Yes, that was pretty good money. So you've seen Midas change quite a bit over the years.

JK: Oh, yes. I haven't been up there for the last three, four years.

Yes, it's a pretty good trip back in there on that gravel road.

JK: I have my claims down there and property down there in Midas.

You still have some property there?

JK: Well, I turned it over to my son. He has it. About right across from the bar.

Is there a house on the property?

JK: No, the house burned down years ago. I have my big camp trailer up there. It's

got a white fence post all around it and barbed wire, all fenced in. Yes, keep the cows out.

Yes, it's open range up there?

JK: Yes.

And the dogs. There's a lot of dogs up in that country. Well, I think that's all the questions I have for right now.

JK: OK.

Note

1. This gentleman was the father of Joe Keller's first wife, Fran.

JOHN “JACK” AND NOREEN MURDOCK

*J*ACK WORKED at mining and milling in Midas, Nevada, in the 1930s and 1940s, while Noreen was raised in Midas. She had four sisters and four brothers, and two of her siblings—Edna Timmons and Byron Wilkerson—are among the chroniclers included in this volume.



DANA BENNETT: *I'm meeting with Jack and Noreen Murdock at their home in Winnemucca, [Nevada], and we're talking about Midas. It's April 24, 1992. I want to hear about Mr. Reynolds' claim, because Dad [Dan Bennett, Friends of Midas] has been wanting to know who had that mine. Was it ever really worked?*

JOHN “JACK” MURDOCK [JM]: Martin Brown and his wife had them claims—that house up the canyon there.

Right next to us.

JM: I remember Mrs. Brown doing assessment work. She would help and get a

little bucket out and muck and throw it over the dump. When he died, she used to still try to take care of it. That little house that they lived in [was one of] them little cabins. We had a Model “T” garage, and they had all kinds of Model “T” parts.

I think the garage is still standing, isn't it? Is that the metal-sided one?

NOREEN MURDOCK [NM]: Yes.

JM: The one on the left of the tin shed, parts of that. That was a Model “T” garage. He sold gas [from] in a barrel, and we paid him [in silver] dollars. He used to say, “Thanks for the silver!” That was an expression he had. “Thanks for the silver!”

Did he have an accent?

JM: He did, yes, he had an accent. He was a Swede, a Norwegian. (Well, Swede. They're all the same.) They had that property as a mining claim.

Where the houses are?



Jack Murdock, 1998.

JM: Yes, he had it as a mining claim. But the land, I guess, belonged to the Moffatt Addition [and was private land, so that wasn't legal]. Then later on he bought the land. That's why Martin Brown did the assessment work in the canyon back there by mining that tunnel. Then Bob Unger bought it. [Jack is referring to the house where Bennetts now live.]

Dad found some water pipe . . . I guess Brown had a tunnel that didn't quite go all the way through to where Dad's place is, in that hill there, and Dad figured he used it for storage mostly. There was a bunch of wood water pipe, you know, with the wire wrapped around it. He used that for his own private system?

JM: They had that water pipe in this town of Winnemucca. That's a collector's item—water pipes. And he had another

little tunnel that started around the hill where Elgeses has it boarded up. That was Martin Brown's.

Now, which years were you in Midas?

JM: I came to Midas in 1933, but I [was] buckarooing prior to that, a few years before. I went there and stayed up at her [Noreen's] brother's in 1933, and we got married in 1937 in Midas.

NM: We were living in Midas. He didn't have much trouble. I was just a kid; he robbed the cradle.

Were you born in Midas, Noreen?

NM: No, my oldest sister and my two brothers and then my younger brother—there was four of them born in Midas. So that was in 1921—I was two years old, I think, when my brother was born there, because he was two years younger than I.

And what was his name?

NM: Leonard. He was killed in World War II in Guadalcanal.

After you got married, you went back to Midas? How long did you stay there?

NM: Well, we went back, and we had a little house there. (It's in Golconda now, isn't it, Jack?) Right across from Les's bar, right across from those trailers, that little house sitting on the corner. Well, that was the first house we lived in. But it was right around the corner where Hartzler has that beautiful little yard. That's where our little house was.

Was there grass there when you were there?

NM: Oh yes, and lilacs.

JM: That's a street.

NM: That was the nicest lot.

Oh, that is a street?

JM: Across the street—Paul Raup built that house on the street.

NM: They called it the bottle house when we lived there. [laughter] We had two rooms—a kitchen and bedroom-living room combination, and it was so cute.

It was on a bottle foundation?

NM: And a bottle walk.

Oh, that's great!

JM: Beer bottles.

Dad said when he came to Winnemucca, you lived in the Getchell house that used to be in Midas.

NM: Right here catty-corner from us [in Winnemucca now]. You can see it out the back door.

Oh, I'd love to see it. And that was the house that Getchell [built]?

NM: That's right.

Now, how big is the house?

NM: It had a huge, big living room, a kitchen, and the porch all the way around and two bedrooms and a bath.

Did Getchell move it to Winnemucca?

NM: No, we sold it, and *they* moved it.

So you lived in it in Midas?



Noreen Murdock, 1998. (Photograph courtesy of Valerie Parks.)

NM: Yes.

So how long were you in Midas then?

JM: Well, we had two children there, two boys when we lived there. And then when Jimmy (the oldest one) was five, we moved to Golconda. No, he was older than that, because he went to first grade in Midas. Then we moved to Golconda, and he went to second grade there. And I had another boy, too, but he wasn't in school. And then we moved to Getchell [Mine], and Jimmy was in the third grade and fourth grade there.

NM: Yes, but the kids were very small then, Jack. They were babies then.

JM: Yes. We lived in Midas after we were married. I lived there, of course, a long time

prior to that, but I graduated from that school in eighth grade.

The one [schoolhouse] that's still standing?

NM: Yes.

About how many kids were in your class?

NM: There was three of us that graduated.

And about how many in the whole school?

NM: Well, they had all eight grades, but they had two rooms: one was for lowerclassmen, and one was for upperclassmen. There was quite a few kids.

With two teachers?

NM: Yes. Most of the time there [were two].

And Jim went to first grade there?

NM: Yes.

Do you happen to know when they finally closed down the school?

NM: Well, Sharon and Jim started to school there. They had a school quite a while after we left, because we weren't there when Dale Wolf taught there, and he taught Ardy's [Noreen's sister] kids. So it was a long time after that, that they closed the school. And then we went back later, after the war. Well, I was there *during* the war.

Throughout all of World War II?

NM: Yes, most of it, 1940s. He was in the service, and that's when I lived in the Getchell house. And then when you came

back from the war, I was in Midas, and we stayed there then, didn't we?

JM: Yes. We had the house when I went to the service. You want to know the history?

Yes, you bet.

JM: Well, we lived up in a little house up the street called the Birdhouse.

Why did they call it the Birdhouse?

JM: Well, because it was a cute little house, and it had the trees and the lilac bushes, and it looked like a birdhouse. And then I had to go to the war.

And between the time I got my papers [and when I left] . . . Mrs. Thompson owned that property up in there. She was [living in] Idaho, and her taxes weren't paid for it. She said to her [Noreen's] dad, "Why don't you or some of your family buy this place, because I don't need it anymore?"

So he talked to us kids and my wife. To keep it in the family, we raised enough money to pay the taxes. We—my brothers Walter and Hughey and I—got the money together. We gave the money to the old man, and he settled with Mrs. Thompson. She sent us quit-claim deeds, and he [my father-in-law] gave us a quit-claim deed to the house and the forty-two lots and the mining claims.

NM: Forty-two lots.

Wow, right in the heart of Midas.

JM: And we moved in there, and it had to have some repairs. There was no water; the roof was in bad shape. So I was a pretty good worker then. I dug a ditch from that house . . . Do you remember the location?

I was just going to ask you where. I've heard approximations.

JM: Well, that's right across from my son's trailer. It's where that gray house is, sitting right there [now]. I dug a ditch from there up to Macy's house, [which is] where Joe Keller stays. I [followed] the water line. I went over to the mines and high graded the [three-quarter inch water] pipe out of the mines and put it in the ground, covered it all up in five days. And I had water for my house [for the] toilets and things. Then I had to go to the service.

When I came home [from the war] and had to go back up to Midas, Noreen came come out to meet me on skis, and Paul Sweeney took us back up to Midas on a sleigh. My brother was already there. He was living up there in George Purdy's house, up in that country.

NM: George Purdy's house used to be next to the dance hall.

So in the wintertime you just expected that you were snowed in and couldn't go anywhere?

NM: Oh yes. When he was in the service, my sister and I skied out every day and brought the mail. They'd bring it so far, then we'd have to go get it. Then the government paid me, and I went up and measured the snow . . . every week or so I had to measure the snow and send it in. I went clear up the canyon, way up a ways. [laughter] It was kind of eerie up there. Lots of snow.

Now, they closed the post office in 1942, right?

JM: About right in there somewhere, they closed it up. Mrs. Lyons was postmistress. And during the war, there wasn't any

work in Midas, so we went over to the Rip Van Winkle Mine to work. They laid us off.

In Midas?

JM: No, in the silver mine . . . I was working in the mill. And so we left there and come to Winnemucca. I went on to San Francisco to work down in [the shipyard as] a stevedore. That was a good place to live, because it was wartime—good housing, lots of lumber—there wasn't any lumber to build houses. We stayed there two months.

Was there still no work in Midas?

JM: That's when I was inducted, see.

And you stayed in Midas, because that was home?

NM: Well, yes.

JM: They stayed there. The kids were little, playing with the tar paper. I got some tar paper and put it on the roof. The nails went all the way through when we put the tar paper on. [laughter] Had to patch up all the holes. I never came back till after the war.

NM: But he got the roof all fixed, though. But my dad and my uncle were up there. My dad stayed with me, and then my uncle had a little place right across the street. But I worked here in Winnemucca for over a year before I went back to Midas when he was in the service. I worked in a hospital there for a year.

Who had the saloon in Midas?

NM: My dad. That was during the war, rationing of tires and gas and the whole bit was on. But he was constable of Midas, too, so he got priority. He got better rations than

just the ordinary person. My sister and I come in for Peraldo's to get a load of liquor every so often, and there wouldn't be any time that we didn't have at least five flat tires between here and Winnemucca. And you would have to patch them and pump them up. [Then] you didn't have spares: we had *one* maybe, but no more. I've patched more tires between here and Winnemucca. [laughter]

JM: There wasn't much work in Midas. Tearing down the mill [for] Charlie Kassebaum. He was tight and wouldn't pay much in wages. I think wages was ninety-seven cents an hour.

You were tearing down the mill that Getchell had built?

JM: Yes, the Gold and Silver mill. Paul Sweeney bought the mill. I think he paid three hundred to four hundred dollars for it, and they sold off the timbers and the tin and the tanks and the whole thing, and then they [made] money on it. Kassebaum bought the timber afterwards (fourteen-by-fourteen timber), and we got to take it apart. We just got out of the service. We didn't want to work; we just did it for a favor.

My brother said, "Why don't you get some help, Charlie?"

And Kassebaum says, "Well, if you don't like it, you know what you can do."

My brother [wanted to] fight, and my brother says, "Well, come on!" [laughter]

I said, "Well, I quit, too."

We came to town and drew unemployment down here. And the lady that run unemployment, she was a sweetheart. She gave us unemployment [without making us] ask for jobs. Well, we kind of stayed around, then I went to the Getchell Mine alone, and I was living alone in the bunkhouse. I didn't last long, so I went back to Midas. Finally, we moved over to Getchell, stayed two years up

there, went back to Midas, and then drove back and forth.

NM: My daddy used to have cattle up in Midas, and he owned where Beverly's [the White] ranch is.

I can remember hearing about a woman called "The Sagebrush Queen."

JM: Sagebrush Queen and Perly Peck.

NM: I don't know if he's her husband or not, but his name was Perly Peck, and she was Sagebrush Queen. Oh yes, she lived down there before we did.

That's what I thought.

NM: Before Dad got it, yes.

Were they ranching or just squatting?

NM: No, I don't ever remember them ranching.

JM: Sagebrush Queen was living with this man on Jim Wank's place [before it was] Wilkerson's homestead. There was a little tin cabin there and a spring, not fenced or anything. That was way before I knew Noreen. And he stole some sheep or something—they had them in their cabin the first time she moved up to Midas with Perly Peck.

Would that be like the early 1930s that she was there?

JM: Oh yes, in 1933, because I came buckarooing through before her dad homesteaded the place. There was just a tin cabin there, and there was nothing [else], no fence or anything. It was a homestead, I guess. Then it was proved-up, and her dad filed on that homestead.

NM: But then they moved to Midas, the Sagebrush Queen and Pearly Peck. She was a character. Oh, she *was* a character!

Why was she called the Sagebrush Queen?

NM: Because she dressed [laughter] You ought to see the way she dressed. She was death on jewelry, just fifteen-cent store jewelry and all that kind of stuff. I don't know how to explain her. She was just something else, wasn't she, Jack? And kind of a rough-talking person and lived just like it sounds—Sagebrush Queen. That was what she liked.

For instance, she wasn't too smart. [laughter] My sister [Laddie, Laura] and I each had little babies—they weren't that high. We lived in that house that was where Red is now (my sister did), and I was over there with her. She had a little girl, and I had a little boy. It was hot in the summer, and we were heating their baby food. Well, we didn't want to build a big fire, so she had both babies in her arms, and I was building just enough fire to heat their food and cook them an egg. Sagebrush Queen had come over and borrowed some kerosene from us [earlier]. Well, she brought it back. So I was going to just start a little fire with that kerosene, which we often did. Well, it wasn't kerosene, it was gasoline! And it just went like this! It caught the dish towel afire: it caught everything. Well, my sister just ran out with the kids. It was hot outside, and she went out with nothing. I took a blanket and ran out. We sent Ardy, my youngest sister, over to town to get help, and here she come back with the two oldest men in the town of Midas that couldn't hardly walk. [laughter] But by that time we got it pretty well out. We'd smothered it, but it burned some things. But that's how smart . . . she brought back gasoline instead of kerosene.

How long was she around?

NM: She was there quite a while, wasn't she?

Do you remember what her real name was?

JM: [I never] did know her.

NM: That's all I ever remember hearing, is Sagebrush Queen. I guess she had a name.

JM: She was laying up with the Scotia boys, from Scotia, Nevada, those miners and

NM: But that wasn't her name.

JM: No? Maybe she was married to him, I don't know, but she was one of the Scotia's woman.

NM: And she took that name?

JM: I don't know that. Anyway, that's where she came from [before Perly Peck found her]. They all had wild women in those days.

Was there a red light district when you were here?

JM: Two of them. One was Three of them.

NM: Up above that creek place that burned down—on the opposite side of the street, on the left going up the canyon.

The rock house that burned?

NM: Yes. And then there's another one. The one over there next to where Beverly White lives now.

JM: Yes, right there, Miles' place. Mileses had this property, but before it was a red light district, it was all little rooms.

NM: That's right. That was one of the first ones, wasn't it?

My understanding was that it was there until they wanted to build a schoolhouse, and then it moved up the canyon because of the schoolhouse.

JM: Well, the one up [furthest] was Mrs. Landis. She was a madam, but she married Jack Landis. She was a reformed lady, and he was a nice fellow.

How many women worked for her?

NM: Well, there was the one they called Silvertip. Her name was . . .

JM: Marion DuBois.

Were there only one or two in town at a time?

NM: That's the only two madams I remember.

JM: Then later Gordon Warren's wife worked up there. Ruby worked up there. Gordon married her.

With the madams, did they have women that they employed?

JM: I never knew of any.

NM: I don't remember of any being employed either. I knew both of them really well.

JM: I came up in 1933. No, there was just Marion DuBois and Lois Landis.

Silvertip, they called her. Growing up, were you told not to go near that area?

NM: Oh yes. That was taboo to us kids.

But did you ever see the women around town?

NM: Yes, we'd see them come down, but they'd never speak to us. They never would acknowledge us until later years.

JM: No, she was just an ordinary person, just an ordinary lady.

NM: She was a very sedate lady, one of them, and the other one was just the opposite—loud and boisterous. Silvertip was very ladylike and very refined. Lois Landis was very much the opposite. You could hear her laughing all over town. In later years when she wasn't a madam anymore, and her husband wouldn't let anybody drive their car but me, I used to take her to town here [Winnemucca]. She drank terrible. She'd say, "I'm going in here to this bar, and when you get ready to go home, I'll be here, and I'll go home with you." That's all she'd come to town for.

So this one time my sister was with me, my youngest sister, and we brought her in to a little bar down there on Bridge Street. I was pregnant with Lorell, and so I went in there, and I said, "Lois, it's time to go."

She says, "OK, but let me buy you a drink."

She didn't mean liquor, and I said, "I'll take an orange." My sister said something like that, and the bartender wouldn't serve me an orange on the bar.

Because you were pregnant?

NM: No, because he thought I was too young! And Lois just threw up her hands, and you could have heard her laughing all

over the town of Winnemucca. Oh, she thought that was so funny!

That's funny. Did the women come and go, or did they tend to stick around for a few years?

NM: They stuck around a long time. In fact, Lois Landis didn't die until not too many years ago. She died here, of course.

How many people were there during the war years?

JM: Well, during the war years there was just Lou (Noreen's father) and Uncle Ed and Chris Christensen. Three permanent residents.

NM: There were families there, so there was more than that.

JM: Paul Sweeney and them were down on the ranch.

Ed and Lizzie. One, two, three, four, and the schoolteacher would be five. That's about it. Were Browns still around?

NM: No, not then. Mrs. Brown was still alive. He had passed away, but she hadn't.

Did he die in Midas?

JM: No, his relatives took him away.

NM: And that was another funny story I have to tell you about them. When they lived in the little Birdhouse, as it was called, they used to walk downtown, Martin and her. Martin was about this high, and she was a big, raw-boned, tall woman. And they both drank, just drank terrible. They'd go downtown, and they would get so drunk. (Oh, I'll never forget this. I was just so young, and I thought it was so hilarious.)

They come up the street, and she would be up here, and he'd be down here. They were both staggering and just a talking, and she'd stop and say, "Mar-teen, you little son of a bitch!" [laughter] Because he'd disagree with something she had to say, and we would just stand there in the house and just about die watching them go by.

Oh, that's great. So most everybody was gone then, by 1942 or 1943?

NM: There was a lot of them gone, yes. But Midas, I can't remember everybody that lived there during the war.

JM: That's it Ed and Lizzie and Chris, and Paul Sweeney and them down at the ranch, and the schoolteacher. No one else living here. Kiyi was there. He'd come and go.

Who's Kiyi?

NM: He was a little, short, Italian man that lived there. He was another character—there were some characters in Midas.

JM: Joe Lowry was his name.

NM: That was his name. He was about this high and about this big around. In fact, he took us out when we went to get married out of Midas. [He helped the men shovel out from the snowstorm.] Little, short Italian. He was a character.

Do you remember Jack Dempsey being up there?

NM: Yes, and I'll tell you about that, at the Getchell house. That's when the Getchells were up there. I was quite young—real young, a kid. But anyhow, Mrs. Getchell asked Dad if I could come over and help her serve and wash dishes. She was

cooking for Jack Dempsey, Governor Balzar, and the governor [Rolph] from California and Warden Penrose from the prison. [Because] I was just a kid, they'd all get in there and help me do dishes and clean up and serve or whatever. They were just the neatest bunch of men, as I remember. And then at night it would be dark, of course, when I'd get through and go home. I got Jack to walk me home. He was a real neat guy. They were all so nice to me.

Now, was he up there very long?

NM: He was up there hunting at that time, but he had that mine up there, the Jack Dempsey mine.

JM: He didn't *have* it, he just worked up there and called it the Dempsey Mine. He was training. He went out jogging and training up there. He drilled just for the heck of it. They came up there to go sage-hen hunting. There's pictures of Dempsey drilling in the tunnel—drilling, blasting. He just did it for a lark and for training.

NM: The mine was named after him.

JM: The Champion Mine.

I wanted to be sure. Do you know anything about John G. Taylor's ownership of that land? When Midas was first founded in 1907, he claimed he owned the land, and he struck an agreement . . .

JM: He owned lots of land there. Well, he owned all the springs. He filed on all the springs he could get ahold of. I seen a map a few years ago, [and] from Clover Valley up, for instance, there is a block of land that's deeded land. And all them springs are deeded. Belongs to Ellison now—he owns all that [the springs]. He bought state land. If you buy state land, you get the water with it. That's what he wanted, the water. And then

over at the bottom of Scraper Springs, him and old man [Ellison] put a drift fence up. He hired Whitey Williams and put that fence clean to the I.D. Ranch. [I.D. stands for Indemnity Land and S.L. stands for State Select Land, according to Murdock.] And he paid homesteaders \$1,000 to take up a homestead. That's the story. Well, he got in trouble over it with the government. It almost broke him, and for years the post and wire stayed there on the ground. John Etchart told me the story.

John G. Taylor and Ellison got up there, and they got to arguing over the drift fence, and Ellison says to John, "My brother John . . ."

And John says, "Brother, hell! Cousin's just good enough for *me*!" and that dissolved that partnership! [laughter]

That sounds like him.

JM: There were little cabins all through that canyon, clean to the I.D. Ranch—little cabins, all alike [where people took up homesteads]. [John] was going to give all them people \$1,000 for their land. But he got in trouble by doing that, so he never got that land. But Ellison owns a lot of land up there, and I guess Taylor, too. Now, I don't know for sure, but it's on the map, all marked. But he gave the water easement, supposedly, to Midas [Joint Venture] to use it.

He struck an agreement (Dad and I found it in the county courthouse) with the Gold Circle Townsite Company. I don't have a legal background (I'm going to have to get somebody to help me understand that mumbo jumbo), but it looks like he sold Midas to the Gold Circle Townsite Company, and then they sold the lots to individual people.

JM: Well, it's possibly so.

NM: Very much possible, yes.

So if there's a spring up there, what you're saying makes a lot of sense.

JM: Well, he owns Frazier Creek. They got a lot of that state land—they called S.L. and I.D. land. The state sold it, and some mineral rights were reserved. Take, for instance, over there at the Eastern Star. That was [I.D. land, all mineral rights reserved]. But John G. Taylor owned that land, a big section of it. My brother and I, we went and located that Eastern Star Mine. Some folks said it was patented; some said it wasn't. So we went to Elko and checked the records, and the lady said it's not patented land: it's open land. So we located it.

But I wasn't satisfied. I went further and looked, and I seen [Wilkerson's homestead was owned by Jim White], and I seen that Eastern Star—deeded land.

I said, "Well, that's government land, open unless it's patented."

She says, "Let's go a little further." We went down through the records, and we looked in the book, and it was an unpatented mining claim over there in this section of John G. Taylor's—because he didn't own the mineral rights, but he owned the land. The prospectors that located it sold it to Utah Hardware, or Continental, I think.

Salt Lake Hardware?

JM: Then it was back to Getchell. And whoever had it didn't pay the taxes on the building and, I guess, on the machinery, and they went up for taxes. That guy in the courthouse (I don't care if he hears me on the tape), he didn't do good. He sold that land to [Major] Eskridge. When they died, the other Eskridge picked it up—it was only just for a few dollars and for taxes. So Maricelli really owns a piece of land that's not really legal, if you want to go back to the

law, because it was an unpatented mining claim, and the county assessor sold it for taxes. The machinery and the buildings was there—that was taxable—and it's all gone. See? Anyway, she said, "You boys will have to pay a lawyer [to straighten this out]."

I said, "No, we withdraw on our claim." Right there, we dropped out. [An]other mining company located that, but that deed was cloudy, and then Maricelli owns that mine. He got a deed to it, which is not really a sound deed.

So that's just like Martin Brown up there. He's got a mining claim. They do funny things in this country.

I'll tell you something else. I don't care, this is the truth. This is what happened. That Getchell house, we bought that house. The receiver was running receivership, and they sold the property off. They told my father-in-law, "If you take care of this property all around here, I'll give you a free chance to buy that house." So Noreen and I bought that house for \$300. And I was supposed to move the house in so many months, but I went [in]to [the] service. When I come back, I paid taxes on the house [that] I was assessed, but I didn't own the land. So we sold the house later to Dave Forsythe for \$2,500. He moved it to town.

He came to me one day and says, "How am I going to sell the lot or get a title to this lot? I don't have the deed to it."

I told him, "I was supposed to move the house, but the bank never pressured me, and the assessor never pressured me. Then I was gone in the war, and they couldn't do it. So it's your baby. The best thing to do, if you want to sell a lot, just give the man a bill of sale. Just write him out a bill of sale to that lot. The bank made no claim to it; the assessors didn't make no claim to it; so just give him a bill of sale."

So he gave this fellow here, the workman, a bill of sale. And that fellow sells to Unger, and Unger sold it to these people.

So on record, that's how things get started. That's Midas. It's legal, but that's the story.

NM: Well, the lot that our little house sat on, we didn't own that either.

JM: That's the street. In other words, in those days, there were so many lots up there. If you wanted to move on the lot, we never paid any taxes: nobody paid any taxes on that land. So if you leave it there, and then you give me a deed to that lot So I've got the deed, and I have it recorded. That's all good enough, and that's on record.



One of the areas that I'm real intrigued with is the cemetery. Do either of you remember anybody being buried there in the years that you were there? And what did it look like?

NM: Well, when I was a kid, it was very well kept. It was all fenced. Was it mesh? Not barbed wire.

Chicken wire or something?

NM: We used to walk over there all the time.

JM: That was the grave stakes around them old fences, around the graves. In the Depression time, and Roosevelt became president, they put out jobs—the WPA [Work Projects Administration] and PW [public works]. They took her dad in as foreman on this WPA project and give the community wire and posts to fence the cemetery and do work around the schoolhouse. That's how the schoolhouse got that fence, when the WPA did [it]. The cemetery wire stayed up there, and the fences never did get put up. It disappeared—somebody hiked it.

NM: But it was fenced when I was a kid—maybe not with that fence, but when I

was a kid that graveyard was fenced, and it had little white . . . headstones—they shaped like this, and they kept them painted white, and it was really attractive.

Was it all wood? Or was there marble?

NM: The pegs were wooden, the little white was wood, yes.

Were there any marble markers there?

NM: Not to my knowledge, no.

JM: There was a white marble marker a few years ago.

Yes, there's three there now, but they look like the style of the 1950s—like maybe somebody went back and put them up.

JM: Then there's several holes up around there.

Yes, you can see where the earth has

NM: Sunken graves, yes.

How many people do you think are buried there?

NM: There were quite a few there at one time. There were several babies buried there.

JM: I think there was a Clawson.

I don't have any names past 1917, except Gordon Warren mentioned Jack Hudson. He said a guy lived up Water Canyon and froze to death one winter.

JM: No. I knew him. There in the little Birdhouse, where the trees are. When we left, Maxine Sweeney rented it to a fellow named Patty Fisher. He was sitting outside on a chair like this, out in the front, and he

died—he froze to death. They couldn't get the coroner in, and they couldn't get him out, so he sat there for a week. That's the man that froze to death.

Jack Hudson. That's what Gordon said. He said there was a guy that lived up Water Canyon.

JM: The only ones that lived up Water Canyon were Con [Constance], and another one was Hutchinson. A big long tunnel going in that hill.

OK. So there were quite a few people in the cemetery?

NM: There were quite a few markers.

But do you remember anybody being buried there while you were there?

NM: Yes, I do, but do you think I can think of those names?

Well, I'm just trying to get an idea when the last time might have been.

JM: Hutchinson.

The little shack that's still sitting up there?

JM: That's up Water Canyon, where the springs is, and to the left. That's the Hutchinsons'. There was a cabin in there and a house and blacksmith shop and . . .

NM: But that first little place on your left-hand side above Silvertip's, that was Con's?

JM: No, I never knew of anybody else dying up in there.

NM: I didn't either—that's what made me ask. I know Patty Fisher did. That was their little house.

JM: Con died up there drinking chokecherry wine. He died of that. [The county coroner asked] my brothers, Red and Hugh, to take him to the mortuary in Elko, to the undertaker. My brothers put him in the pickup and took him to Elko by way of Tuscarora, and had a flat tire in wintertime on top of the hill. They had to fix the tire [and to keep the car from] rolling back, he was stiff, so they just took him out and shoved him underneath the wheels, so the truck didn't roll back down. Well, they got him in there, and when they brought him in, the undertaker says, "Good job." They had him wrapped up [in a blanket].

That's something. I think it's kind of awful.

JM: What about Peggy, Virginia Shield's mother? Someone rock picking found a dead sheepherder, and she went up as a nurse. It was a cold winter night, and she crawled in bed with the dead sheepherder to keep warm, so she wouldn't freeze till morning come. She was brave, I thought.

NM: That's another one that I never heard.

JM: Well, Mrs. Tubbs (Virginia's mother) told me that herself. Crawled in with a dead sheepman.

NM: How'd they expect *him* to keep her warm? [laughter] I mean, he would be cold and stiff.



Well, what kind of parties do you remember? Was the town hall kind of the center?

NM: Oh, that was wonderful. Yes, we had a dance every Saturday night, rain or shine, and then when the boys in the band stayed at the hall. [At other times] we'd get in a big truck, a Squaw Valley truck, and we'd all go over to Tuscarora to a dance,

riding in the back of the truck. Oh, we had a good time—many, many, many good times up there in that hall.

Was it local people who played the music, or did you have musicians who came in?

NM: Usually local people, yes. Oh, we came in, too, every Saturday night. I don't think I missed a Saturday.

JM: Where was I?

NM: You wasn't around. Well, you were around, and I knew you but not that well.

Were there any holidays that were more popular than others? Was the Fourth of July the big thing?

JM: They never had anything up in Midas when I was up there, till Sleeping Beauty Mining Company put on a rodeo in celebration of the miners. I rode a calf up and down the street, and I got stomped.

Down the main street?

JM: Yes, right up there by that Birdhouse. They had races. My brother-in-law Al ran in the races, and they brought cows out there and everything.

NM: We used to have Fourth of July picnics and Fourth of July celebrations. When I was a kid, just before you get to Bob [Unger]'s fence [at the ranch], you turn down to go down to Spring Creek—we used to have celebrations down there. We used to have all kinds of races and everything—great big watermelon busts and all kinds of games for kids.

JM: They had a baseball team. They had a baseball diamond down at the mouth of the canyon.

NM: Just before you went through the Squaw Valley gate, that was the baseball diamond.

Who did they play?

NM: They played Elko Correctional School and, I think, Elko proper. The kids played in the different places around. I think Mountain City was over there once. Then the men used to have their own baseball team.

What did the women do? Were there clubs?

NM: Yes, lots of card clubs, pinochle clubs.

Whist?

NM: Bridge. I was just a young girl. They talked me into joining that. Mrs. Primeaux, the ones that had the store there, she played for *blood*, and if you'd make a bad bid or played the wrong card, you'd get a kick under the table. I didn't last long. I quit. I couldn't handle it. Yes, they got real serious about their bridge.

How about some of the everyday stuff, like laundry? Everybody had running water. Was there one day that was wash day every week?

NM: Always Wednesday, wash day.

JM: [Some] didn't *have* water, and they got their water out of the Primeaux's well.

NM: By the side of the house there. It's still there.

JM: There was no electricity. The company had electricity.

NM: Yes, when the mill started, there was [electricity from] the powerhouse, but there wasn't [any] before that [until] about the mid-1930s when the mill was built, wasn't it, Jack?

JM: No. The mill was built when the gold was twenty-two dollars an ounce, and that was before 1933.

Is that right after Roosevelt was elected? Is that one of the things he did?

JM: The mill was built before that, and then it shut down a while. I came through there with Lolo Munos one time as a kid, and we crossed around. I remember them tailing ponds from the mill. I ate up there at Mrs. Richardson's restaurant [and was] deathly sick. I had too much ice cream and stuff, and I couldn't eat any breakfast. That was in 1929, [so it would have been] running in 1928. Then it quit. Then I didn't come back till gold went up to thirty-five [dollars an ounce]. When it started up again, [they] started mining all the dumps and everything, putting them through [the mill]. It was a good little mill—a very nice, well-built mill. [It had a] machine shop—a first class mill. There were also people at the Elko Prince Mill. That burned down in . . .

Nineteen twenty-two, wasn't it?

JM: Ray Clawson [was] working on it. After the fire they took it down.

[Jack named these mills:] 1911 Elko Prince Mill; Esmeralda Mill, cyanide; Rand Mill, flotation; Eastern Star; Gold and Silver Circle, seventy-five-ton mill; Miners Gold, stamp mill; Sleeping Beauty Mill owned by Devines; arrastra mill below Esmeralda; Dunsmore Mill (which was never operated); the Coots Mill, down the canyon; and the Young Mill, which was a Lane-type mill.

The lady that killed her husband? Dale Young?

NM: Well, she was acquitted of it.

JM: I don't know how he died, but there's a story that some figure some guy might have done it, but I don't know.

She was let off, but she was arrested for it.



When doing your day-to-day work, could you hear the mills when you were in Midas?

NM: Yes. The powerhouse is what you heard mostly. You could hear that powerhouse [if it was a quiet day].

JM: There were three big diesel engines. Fairbanks Morris and a Dow engine. That burned down. Dave Forsythe was on shift, and the engines was still going when she was burning. He was sleeping, snuck in the mill, and heard that noise. It got too hot and caught afire, and by the time they got out, he couldn't get back to the engine, which was still running when it burnt down to the ground. [The powerhouse] was still running. Still running! So they started it up, got them fixed, and put them back again, and ran the engines out in the open.

And that's Gold Circle Consolidated?

JM: Yes. Before getting it built again, they put in an engine to run the shafts—turn the thickeners and the agitators—from the power runoff. We had to go up there and start this engine to keep it going, because if the thickeners stopped, you'd have to blow all the [agitators with an air hose so the cyanide pulp] wouldn't become solid.



Edna [Timmons] mentioned a murder that she wasn't sure she remembered, because she wasn't around, but she said that you might remember it. And she said it was two women—one woman killed another. Does that ring any bells?

JM: No.

NM: Not a woman killing a woman, no.

Maybe I've got that story wrong.

JM: There was Tamale Dick

NM: . . . killed the wrong man, yes.

JM: [Killed his] best friend, accidentally.

NM: Yes, Big Enough. They never did prove it, that he killed this fellow, but they said he threw him down the shaft. Remember?

Big Enough was the name of the guy?

NM: Yes, he was a great, huge, big man.

JM: Dick Debron located and owned the Lucky Boy, and Big Enough fell down the Lucky Boy shaft.

NM: Well, that's one version of it, but there was another version of it, too.

When was that?

NM: That was when we were living in Uncle Ed's house, wasn't it?

JM: I don't know about that. For two years I worked out [at the Getchell] mine out of Golconda, then two years up there in Midas after two years in the service. But in between we'd always go back and forth to Midas.

Do you remember anybody ever being locked up in the jail? Was it ever used?

JM: Yes.

NM: It was used.

JM: Jess Snider was the constable and locked this woman up, and she broke out of that jail.

How did she break out?

NM: Mrs. Andreëg was her name.

JM: Yes, she broke out of the jail [through the] window.

What was she in there for?

JM: Drunk and disorderly.

NM: She got drunk. She was going to beat up my mother. Oh, she just really was wild. She tried to kill her husband right after that. They [Andreëg's] had an ice cream parlor there. You know where Les's is now? That was a little ice cream parlor before it became a bar. (Well, it was also a bar previously, and then Fred Andreëg had an ice cream parlor.) And my mother had a restaurant there with Tamale Dick's [bar at the other end of the restaurant]. Mrs. Andreëg thought my mother was after Fred [her husband], so she got drunk, and she was really going to Jess Snider was the constable. He locked her up in that jail, but she got out.

JM: The jail sits back here.

As far as I can figure, that's the only original building still left, because it was built in 1908. The county paid for it.

JM: This picture was taken after 1933.

NM: Yes, [it was built] right after the camp was struck, not too long after the camp

Right. And I think it was built because of the first murder.

JM: Mr. Carlos Saragini had a garage there above where the jail was, which was set back from the main street on an alley.

Now, on the 1920 census (I was just looking at that a couple of weeks ago), it listed about twenty-three men who were all living together in one facility.

NM: In the bunkhouse?

It just gives a number. Would that have been

JM: That's here.

NM: There's a bunkhouse. Yes, there were quite a few men living in there.

That was at one of the mines? Just like a boardinghouse?

JM: Yes.

NM: Well, no, it wasn't only miners who lived there. Jess Snider lived there. In fact, he was the constable.

Bamberger's name was on there.

NM: Bamberger, yes. George Fisher had the little blue bug [Volkswagen automobile]. Otto Alexander [who worked in the mine]

JM: The only ones that lived in the bunkhouse had to be boarding with the Gold and Silver Circle Mill.

NM: No, I figure different. George Fisher, I don't know if he worked in the mine or not. Otto worked in the mine, yes. But Jess Snider didn't work in the mine. And who else did I say?

You said Bamberger. I think I counted twenty-three.

NM: Yes, there were several rooms. That bunkhouse was a good-sized building. I can just see all over—that blue bug out there and Jess Snider's great big, old-fashioned Dodge.

It surprised me to see that there was such a large building. Fascinating stuff on that census. It just became available, just in the last two months. They hold them for seventy-two years, and then you can go and look at the details. Because they go around and get names and relationships and where the person was born, where their parents were born, and just a wealth of information. It shows that about 10 percent of Midas' population in the 1920s spoke Swedish as their mother language. They weren't native English speakers. I thought that was a really high percentage of foreign language in little bitty Midas.

NM: That is!

JM: Well, the miners were mostly Swedes and Danes and foreigners

NM: The Burtons were Swedes, I know that. Right, Jack?

Yes, the Burtons were Swedes. Browns.

NM: Yes, the Browns were Swedes. Jacobson.

NM: Jacobsons, yes. Vic Jacobsons. They sure were.

Now, when you left Midas in the 1940s, what did it look like? Was it starting to be dismantled? Or was it a true ghost town where it was boarded up, and there was just nobody there?

JM: It was pretty much like that till right after the war. Then they started tearing the buildings down for lumber.

Who was doing that? Just anybody who was around?

JM: Well, anybody who wanted any lumber, they would tear it down.

NM: Well, they left a lot of the buildings boarded up for quite a while.

JM: It was before 1933 to 1937. You could see how they disappeared. And then the fire took a few of them, the good ones.

When the schoolteacher's house exploded, next to Warren's store or close to Warren's store, there was a gas tank or something that blew up?

NM: Nobles lived next to Warren's store.

I'm probably getting that story mixed up, too.

JM: This house over here, that's called the Vic Jacobson house.

NM: Over there where Betty and Pete live, in the trees.

What we call the fairgrounds there.

JM: And this Mrs. Barkdull, she was filling a kerosene lamp or gas lamp. She lit a

match to see if it was full. That was it! She went out of the house. Her brother was going back down that road, and they ran back in and got the baby out. Before they got over the top of there, the house was gone. Went just like that.

It's amazing that more of the town wasn't burned. When you look at other towns around Nevada, Midas was lucky.

JM: Anything that burned up in Midas was from gasoline or kerosene, something like that.

It looks like there was a fire at the cemetery. You see burnt pieces.

JM: Yes, recently that all burned off. The fire came all the way up here one time, burned everything.

So when you moved away from there in the 1940s, it still pretty much looked . . .

NM: Yes. A lot of the houses were boarded up, but other than that, they hadn't started tearing them down.

JM: We started tearing them down for lumber and stuff.

Was there (like there is now) one dump where everybody tossed their garbage?

NM: With a ditch. Everybody used the ditch.

That's on the same side of the road as the dump, or the other side?

NM: You know where Primeauxs are? That ditch that goes right on down under the bridge there? People threw their stuff all over there. I still do it. I loved to go through the dump. You find everything.

JM: I collect lots of purple bottles out of that ditch.

NM: Me too! I collect lots of souvenirs out of there.

JM: A nice silver ashtray with a little wishbone and a little baby chick on it, and it had a cigar holder on it. This is what your dad ought to do up there.

He's good at doing stuff out of old junk, huh?

JM: Way down at Quartzite, Arizona, in a trailer court, I saw all these things. [referring to "found art" sculptures in front yard] This is made out of a chain sprocket and a mowing machine seat. The wings are beer barrel stays; and the legs, well, there's a turnbuckle and a blacksmith tongs welded together; and a piece of iron and different things put on over here. You see a hay rake wheel and another wheel and an umbrella. And this is an Indian made out of a wheel and pipe wrench.

Are these insulators?

JM: Yes, and then this is a bow and an arrow and hay baling wire.

NM: They are so neat!

Hysterical! Great! Somebody's really creative.

JM: A wheel with a moustache, wire on it, and a bucket for a hat.

NM: Your dad would like that in his yard.

JM: This is a grave. The headboard says 1876, white one, and two boots coming out of the ground. And out of here is a pipe coming up, and some pine bar fingers, and a

little thing like a gun. Here's a horse over here.

A canteen. What a riot!

JM: I collect all that over at the dump. I can weld it.

NM: Hey, you're a good welder.

JM: Set them out in the yard.

Last weekend when we were up there . . . Dad doesn't have a pickup, but we have a pickup. So he decided that since we were there with a pickup, it was time to go junk collecting. And we went down on the creek across from the dump and pulled out almost an entire car—the windshield and the pieces.

JM: Where?

Not quite to the bridge. We were almost directly across from the dump, where the sage is really high.

JM: Where Young's place was?

Yes. Hauled that back up the canyon, and he reassembled it up near that mine dump that he's got up there. So that was like a car wreck—although if you think about it, that's a stupid place for a car to wreck. And then we went over to the Elko Prince, and he picked up barrel rings and an old baby buggy and some other rusted stuff.

NM: Show her your yard out here.

JM: The other day I bought some barrel stays, and I thought about making something like that. A geologist and his wife at the Elko Prince, he found an old cookstove. The back was all gone, the lids was gone. He took it home to Winnemucca, and he restored it. Instead of putting metal

in it, he put hardwood, and he made himself an office desk out of it. Beautiful old thing. He took a hard wire brush and buffed it all. It looked good. You can do that with old junk. I like that stuff.

NM: Yes, our yard looks like we like it, too!

JM: I should take time and get a welder and do that.

NM: Yes, you could do that easy.

JM: Especially, looks a lot better than a bunch of old lawn out there.

NM: [laughter]

Sure! People come from miles around to see your yard.

JM: Here they come, wanting to take pictures. Put a can up there, "donations appreciated." [laughter]

One year for Father's Day, my sister gave Dad a belt changer. So he'd go out and greet people as they came in with this little belt changer. Too wild. He had some people . . . They had just wandered into town, but they knew somebody. And he was down at Edith's (I forget the whole detail), but he told them to just go on up there and wait patiently; the tour would start on the hour. We didn't know what was going on. Here came these poor people that had been told this ridiculous story, that they should just wait calmly until the tour guide arrived. Line up over here.

NM: [laughter] I can just hear that! Oh, my goodness.

JM: There's a lot of junk around. I can make them, he can make them. Take old

chains, bend it down like a backbone of a horse or a dinosaur. Spot weld them so they stay rigid. Stand it up, cut the tongs off of them; piece of pipe, this way back for legs. Then take a mowing machine or plow, put on it a face and two big eyes with nuts; and have hay wire for hair, and hay wire twisted for the tail, weld it on.

There you go!

JM: Looks good. We've seen it.

NM: Yes, they are clever. They are really clever. They have those in Quartzite at a trailer park, and it's just really neat.

Dad set up kind of a forge area, and he has a mannequin in there that we call Charlie. He has one of those old stone knife grinders that you run with your foot. And Charlie's sitting there, and more than one person has walked in and sees this guy sitting back there.

NM: You're kidding!

JM: He has a coffin up there. He might as well keep it up there.

As far as I know, the one that we used for the haunted house. And Peggy played Mrs. Brown in the coffin one year. Poor Mrs. Brown, she's been tormented so much.

NM: No, we weren't there when Peggy was Mrs. Brown. They borrowed our coffin every year, but we started . . . Jim made the coffin. My daughter was in the coffin, Lorell.

JM: The first year we put on a little one. It was just an idea with Jim, my son, and I. We'd go to make a Halloween up there. It was something about "The Ghost of Martin." I put on my monkey mask and set

there, had a fire going and gloves on and handed the kids candy. We had some chew dip and things. People liked dip. So the next year we did it, Jim made the coffin and headboard and that stuff. And Barbara went up and sat in those little cabins and screamed like a witch.



When was that road put in that we use now to get into Midas?

NM: Yes, that's a good question. What year was that? I was really upset about that. I liked to come in under the bridge.

JM: Had to be after the war.

NM: Yes, it was, way after the war.

Why would they bother putting it in after Midas was already there?

NM: I don't know. The road was already established. It was much shorter and a lot nicer little drive.



JM: See that pipeline?

Oh, yes.

JM: All right, this is where we used to live. This is gone, and this is where George DeLong has his property. If you look over there, there's a dump right in here and a tunnel. There used to be water in it, and her dad's cow used to get a drink of water out of it. They run this ditch down there, and Herb Thompson was going to get the water to his place. They were short of water in them days, too.

NM: Yes, that's true, there was. There was always a time of the year when . . .

You didn't have it?

NM: Yes.

JM: So anyway, everybody took . . . There is water: you can get water from that tunnel down here for drinking purposes or bathing. So many wells around there were polluted. The hand-built wells.

From the mining activities?

NM: Sewage.

And there was no septic, was there?

NM: No, [just] outdoor toilets.

JM: There was only enough water for just a few people. These people up here, they didn't have water. Down here was a triplex pump. We pumped water from here, up past the schoolhouse, up into this tank here in case they needed it for fire, and all the way up to the Elko Prince. Now, if the Wilkersons had a fire, they lived down under this hill, and they had water, because the pipeline came up—that house had water. It was the Getchell house, one of the Getchell houses that burned down.

OK, all right.

JM: They had water, and Getchell had water. And Warren's store. That's all that had water. And Macy's.

NM: Macy's had water usually.

JM: That's the end of the line. [Only] so much water to anybody. They never really sold it. They asked for donations. We had water up here, and the pipe was across the street. The school and Wilkersons had water, and water went into a tank for fires. The men would shower in a little cabin where the water could be turned on.

NM: How are they coming with the water up there, now?

I think they're coming along OK. Oh, shoot, to be real honest with you, I don't pay close attention, because after a while you get tired of hearing about it.



JM: Did you want to know where the cemetery was? Over this grade . . .

Well, I've been there. It's in this draw. You drop around this road.

JM: Right through here and up this way, down this way, go on over here.

Oh, so it'd be on the end of the draw?

JM: Right down here. Now, if you look over here, you see Timmons's antenna.

And the road went down the draw?

JM: Yes, goes on down to this valley. There's a valley going down that way, right about in there. It's all covered with brush.

They had the prisoners in there last summer or the summer before, and they've done some major cleanup.

NM: Oh, really?

Yes, it's not as hard to reach. Well, it's still a trek to get there. Where the three graves are that are marked, they cleaned out around there. My husband and I were digging around there last Saturday, trying to get an idea of what it looked like. And we saw these two boards laying on the ground, and we said, "You know, they kind of look like . . ." And John turned them over, and they fit together perfectly, and made one of those markers. You could see the white paint on the bottom. The rest of it showed some burn marks, but you could see that at one time it was white.

NM: Yes, it was. I can just see that in my mind. When I was a kid, I can see those white markers.

JM: You drive around there, you'll get stuck.

Well, we walked. When we were kids, we would ride the three-wheelers around, and we'd leave them parked up by where the mill used to be, and walk in along the fence and then down. It didn't occur to us that we could have just parked there at the top of the draw, and just had a straight shot in. Oh, well, it was probably more fun the other way.

JM: Yes, it'd be nice if they could preserve that cemetery a little bit.



Was there a doctor in Midas when you were . . . ?

NM: Yes, in fact his stepson graduated from eighth grade with me. His name was Dr. Pettingill, and Junior Pettingill graduated with me.

How long was he there? Because I know he was there in 1911, 1912. His name is on some birth certificates.

NM: Yes, because my older sister was born there, I think. [Laura, the oldest sister, was the first white baby born in Midas. The first baby born in Midas was Minerva Macy, whose father was from an American Indian tribe from the East and whose mother was born into a tribe in Oregon, according to Noreen.]

She had Dunscombe. Al had Pettingill. I was just looking at those five hours ago.

NM: And Byron's? Did he have something there?

You know, that birth certificate wasn't there [Elko County Recorder's office].

NM: My brother [Byron], I don't think, had Pettingill.

The certificates they have in Elko only go up to about early 1916. Quite frustrating. I wanted to find more than that.

NM: Yes. Well, my younger brother Leonard, two years younger than I, he was born there. I was born in Beowawe. I guess we went to Midas from Beowawe.



JM: There was tough living in Midas when there was no work, no money, no wages. They never paid wages. They worked all the men in the mines and give them 10 percent for their wages. And the storekeeper, Primeaux, and Getchell was in cahoots. They bought up the miners' wages for ten cents on the dollar, and the saloon keeper did, too—Pat Murphy. They all went in together—crooks. Anyway, Pat Murphy outsmarted them, took it all. He sued them. And Getchell got mad at him, and [that's when] Getchell left. He went over to this other place and started that up [the Getchell mine outside of Golconda].

You know, there was a biography that was written of Getchell in the 1950s that was never published, and it's at UNR in their Special Collections. I was reading it a couple of days ago. He talked about how it was real important to him that his men be paid and be taken care of, and he wasn't going to sell out to Ormsby until it was guaranteed that they were all paid, because they all trusted him. It sounded like, "What a big family man."

JM: I've still got a couple hundred dollars wages coming.

NM: That is why Midas has never done anything, on account of Getchell. Thereafter, he give Midas such a terrible name and such a black eye. Oh, he didn't do right. He did *not* do right. You ask any mining man.

JM: In the Depression, the "little man" went up to Midas. The mill was running, so they'd go out on a hill, and they'd take a lease, and they'd dig. And you had to have twenty-dollar ore—that's one ounce of gold in them days, twenty dollars—to make it. And they was all making a living. [It used to be] you could go to Midas and rent a cabin for five dollars and sit there; charge your groceries for a little bit at the store. Pretty soon somebody'll want to hire you to come help shovel some, and you'd make a living; you could get by in the Depression. There's leasers all over the hill [who] are working, drilling by hand. They didn't have jackhammers or gasoline equipment. And I don't know why today that they couldn't put that whole area together and work it.

NM: Well, I'm glad they don't, personally. I hope they never go in there.

JM: Well, they won't, too many individuals.

NM: Well, that's good. I hope it stays that way, because I don't want them in there.

At the Elko Prince they hit water at the nine hundred [feet], didn't they?

JM: Lots of water in there. I was down in there. Good vein, but it's faulted on the north end, which cuts over to the Miners Gold; and the south is down by the Judge and the Rex. It's all been milled. All the dumps have been milled from the Elko Prince. And then the next is the Grant

Jackson at only two hundred feet, and the length's four hundred feet, and it never bottomed out, the ore. And that's the deepest mines this side of the Eastern Star. That's only a couple of hundred feet, but there's more—lots of little prospect holes up there.

I was talking to a mining geologist a couple of weeks ago, and in his opinion, Midas was still viable—that there's still money to be made out of it. But he said nobody listens to him, so . . .

JM: I know it. But they don't want to go underground. They *can't* go, there's not enough room. There's too many [people with] a claim. A company's got to have lots of land for mill sites and dumping and leaching ponds. Where do you put that? I don't know why they all don't get together. Whether you got the best one or you got the worst, all go together and take a small royalty off of it. If it works out, we all make it—if we don't, we don't, but get together on it.

NM: I have a selfish feeling. I'm very selfish when it comes to Midas. I feel like Midas is mine. I still feel that way. I don't know, I just feel like it belonged to us. It doesn't belong to them.

JM: We had forty-two lots in Midas. We couldn't give them away. And we finally sold some [for] fifty dollars a piece. And then John Sabin came in, and he bought one. Mary said, "I bought some lots [and you promised me]. You said you would sell me another one if I need it. I need another one." We sold them for fifty dollars. And then [when things] kind of got going, because he got the best ones . . . And we just fooled around till we got rid of all of them. Then I turn around, and I buy the one up on the hill, bid on it for \$1,400. That's strange, isn't it? Got rid of all the others, and then we

subdivided two claims up the canyon up there, made six lots out of them. We're going to keep them.

NM: Where the gravel pit is.

JM: I want a good price out of them, because they're good, one-acre lots. They got three wells now. They dug three wells on the gravel pit, and they got water in them. And I don't know which one they want. We'll give them a deal. We're going [to work] on one of the other ones to keep it from caving in, because I already drilled, so the rock don't fall in.

NM: Did you go to Midas this weekend?

No, I was in Elko for a meeting. So I'm taking advantage of having to be in Elko on business to do some Midas stuff. You know, I've been interested in this stuff for years, ever since Willie Wilcox got me fired up, in, I guess it was 1978 or something like that. So I put together some stuff when I was in college. I wrote a paper on it once. Then after I graduated from college, I thought, "Well, I've got all this time, I should start putting stuff together." So I interviewed Edna, and I interviewed By and Gordon and Edna Schuyler. I think that was it. And then I got sidetracked, put it away. But this last year, my dad has started getting on me, "You know, you'd better do something." So the last couple of months I've started getting into it, and I figure—Midas, little bitty town. How hard can it be? [But] there is so much stuff. Oh, my gosh.



JM: They made whiskey up there and sold it.

I wanted to ask about that—I mean, part of the time when Midas was hot was during Prohibition.

NM: Yes, my dad used to make it . . . in Reno.

And there were stills there in Midas?

NM: Yes.

I was telling you about the tunnel that Dad found the water pipe in. Somebody thought that might have been where Brown kept a still.

NM: It's possible.

JM: Con used to make chokecherry wine.

NM: Con had a still up there.

JM: There were stills in there, but they were kept secret, because I used to scrounge around for copper and junk, and I found a lot of stuff up there. [I'd] gather it and sell it to the junk man.

Was there trouble with the prohibition officers?

JM: Oh yes, there was.

Did they come in and check on them?

JM: Hampton Brady was a "Prohibe," a Prohibition officer—he was a tough one. But they all got around him some way or another. Why I used to bootleg There's a lot of old characters up there. Old Al Ramsey

NM: Well, Jack Hampton.

JM: Yes, he had it, but I don't think he made it. They all went out to a party over at Frazier Creek. I had this brand new 1933 Chevrolet, and these guys took my car and tied me up to the bed. I couldn't get out, and they drug me [drove my car] all over the

county. Then they come back, and they turned me loose. Well, anyway, I don't know where I was sleeping. I was down by Shooting Star [at the Lewis cabins], and all us boys were single, and we were just sleeping anywhere. Al Ramsey come to me, and he happened to get some whiskey. He was my partner. So he had a jug to get the whiskey, so we went on down to Jack Hampton's house. That's behind where that big, long-bodied poplar is: there was a house in the ditch. (I can show you.) And he goes in there, and Jack Hampton's sound asleep with his eyes open and his mouth open, dead-to-the-world drunk. You'd stick the flashlight in his eyes: he never moved. Then Al started siphoning out a gallon of whiskey, out of the jug. I'm nervous! Oh, my God, I got nervous. I said, "Give me that jug!" There's a twenty-gallon barrel, and I picked it up, and I could not have carried it. Then he carried it, so I put it in the car, and he got his whiskey. We went to the Lewis cabins, and he's got to work. Well, I went on down to the ranch. Now, he kept the gallon jug for me to take down to the ranch. Well, on my way down to the ranch I got kind of nervous, and I thought I'd better hide it. I stopped on the way, and I put it under a culvert.

Well, the next day, this Frank Ellison who was . . . (I didn't like him), but he said, "Let's go up the road and get a load of hay, feed the calves."

On the way up, I went past this culvert, and he noticed something. I told him he smelled a rat. I think he could smell the whiskey. And then we come back with the hay, he said, "You know what? I saw something shining down there. Let's stop here and see what it is."

He knew what it was! He seen me that night in my headlights when I stopped the car and stuck it down there. He got that whiskey, and he drank it all up and was dead drunk. Dirty son of a gun. If you're going to do anything, put the lights out on the car and walk back and do it. Don't stay there in

the headlights. He was down there, half a mile away, looking.

The moral of the story, huh?

JM: He drank all that whiskey. I told Jack Hampton about it later. We worked together. I told him what I did. I apologized. I took it. I didn't have no choice. Well, he didn't care. He stole it, too.

Oh, that's funny.

JM: Oh, he stole it off of Pat Murphy. Pat Murphy was the bartender. Oh, yes, Ramsey'll take it.

And Hungry Joe? He would take a gallon of whiskey to work with him and drink it up. Every day Hungry Joe would drink a gallon while he worked. He wouldn't go outside.

I was just a kid. Kids get in trouble innocently, you know. Oh, yes, I remember, golly, drinking that rot-gut whiskey one time. I got so deathly sick. He [Byron] could never drink, and I could never drink, and we got so sick. Went down to Don Monteros' house. He's a nice guy. His wife was gone. He took us, and he put us to bed, [because] I didn't have no place to sleep. And he went to work. We stayed in his house, and he never said a word.

Prohibition didn't affect Midas much? Doesn't sound like it.

NM: No, I don't think so.

JM: They sold whiskey, a dollar-and-a-half a pint. Kiyi sold it a dollar-and-a-half a beer bottle, with a cork stuck in it—a beer bottle

Pretty steep prices if you're only making ninety-seven cents an hour.

NM: Yes, it is, and for a beer bottle.

JM: Well, a dollar-and-a-half—lots of money then. I was only getting a dollar a day on the ranch.



JM: Well, there's a lot of stories. Oh, you were talking about somebody getting killed. That fellow in Gordon Warren's house, that fellow living there. The guy that lived up by the post office, had that little bootleg whiskey. So this one guy set him up.

NM: Oh, over that woman?

JM: Yes, this was two of them.

NM: Yes, it was two.

JM: We weren't there, but I know Dick Debron [told me] . . . This one guy in town didn't like this fellow, because he was a little odd, and he was making a little whiskey and stuff.

The guy had the bar that's across from John Sabin?

JM: Well, he didn't have a bar; he lived there. He was bootlegging, making a little whiskey. He was selling it on the q.t., and this other guy kind of didn't like him for that. Well, a man and woman was living down there in Warren's store. And this odd bootlegger would go down and talk to her. Well, this other guy did this dirty trick, because Dick Debron told me. He said this guy would go down and tell this woman, "That fellow [the bootlegger] likes you."

Then he would hint [to the odd bootlegger], "That woman likes you." So he [the bootlegger] gets to [doing] more visiting. In the meantime, the other guy was telling the husband that worked in Squaw Valley that that guy was screwing around with his wife. That fellow come up and killed him one day. And that's what Dick Debron told me. So I don't know what happened to that fellow. He got sent to the pen, I guess.

NM: Little Joe Bilboa?

JM: No, he got out of it. He got off the hook.

NM: Lots of things going on back there.

JM: They did funny things in them days. I don't understand it. The law didn't Well, for instance, her dad was constable. There's a fellow [Joe Bilboa] up there fooling around with My father-in-law said So he had him arrested. And he says to me, "Here, Jack, hold him. I'm going to call the sheriff." I knew Joe real well: he's a Basco. There was really no evidence, just circumstantial evidence. They took him to Elko, and they got a Basco to represent him [interpret for him] rather than an attorney. He confessed to it—that quick, gone to Carson City for two years. I didn't think he was that way. I think he just wanted to get out—go to jail for the winter, because I saw him afterwards. So they didn't give a man fair trials back then.

What was it like here as a kid? I mean, was it a place that you felt safe?

NM: Oh, yes, very. The girls Every Sunday, it was a ritual, the school would take our lunch and go for a hike. We'd go for miles and never think about anything. I never did know of anything like that going on up there. The only thing, we had an old man there. And he did like to (I don't know what you'd call it) fondle little girls. He did.

I think Edna mentioned him.

NM: Yes, he did. He was known for that. He never did sexually molest one, but he liked to put his arm around them and kiss them and all that stuff.

JM: He used to play spin the bottle with all the boys.

NM: Well, I'm not talking about boys right now. Anyhow, that was the only incident I ever remember like that. We just went where we wanted and when we wanted—up in the hills, go in the mines and everything else, you know.

Well, we used to have Reverend Shriver (I think his name was), who come to Midas once every few months, two or three months, to have church services. It was a nondenominational service. That's the only church we ever knew, was Sunday School.

Was that in the town hall?

NM: Yes, in the dance hall. And that's the only time that we ever had church services, was when he'd come. And this one Sunday after church, these girls and I We'd get all dressed up for church, too, boy. And we decided to go to the Elko Prince, because there was two young guys up there that was working, and one of them was running the hoist. We went up there and went down the shaft by ourselves. He let us down. We went down, and they had the stalagmites hanging. I know we was hitting them, getting dirty. But me, they knew that I knew enough about mines that I did know all the bells, and I knew what to do and everything. These other girls didn't, and it was really my fault. I knew the bells. And instead of ringing right, I rang for them to raise the hoist, and then we climbed on after it was going up, which is practically suicide. Well, we did that. And that was a thousand-foot shaft, wasn't it, Jack, nine hundred, or a thousand?

JM: Yes, a thousand-foot shaft. Two levels, and they worked mules.

NM: Oh, that was the thing we used to do—go over to the mill and walk across—I don't know what you call these cyanide tanks, got the agitators in them.

JM: Thickeners.

NM: Thickeners? And they had these paddles going [around] in them, but they had crosswalks on them. We used to go across there (oh! Jack, we did). One day Don Hargrove caught us going across there, and I'm telling you, he told us to get out and never come back. Yes, we did all those things—terrible. I was the town devil. [laughter] I used to go to the bunkhouse (how well I remember the bunkhouse), and George Fisher had a little blue bug; and Jess Snider, the constable, had this big old Dodge. I'm sure it was a Dodge. They used to leave the keys in them, and I used to take them, and take all the kids I could get piled in, and away we'd go! [laughter] I could drive, but I didn't know a darned thing much about a car—nothing. But I could steer it and keep it in the road. Oh, my gosh! And they never did say one word to me about it. I think they left the keys in their cars on purpose. I still do.

But one time You know where Lefty's Bar is? You know that hill that goes up where the big school used to be?

Yes.

NM: Well, one time I had four or five kids in that little blue bug of George Fisher's, and we decided we was going to go up that hill. There never was a car that made it up that hill. [laughter] And it got halfway up, and, of course, it couldn't go no further. I killed the engine—didn't know how to back up. Here we come, and the men all came running. They were all sitting out on the bench; I'll never forget it, and they all come running up the [laughter] Oh! But we always felt safe, and I don't ever remember being afraid.



JM: When we got married, we came back to live in Midas, and they had a shivaree.

Oh, yes, tell me about your shivaree.

JM: We used the dance hall, I think it was for five dollars. And I bought two, half-gallon jugs of whiskey and some candy. The women made refreshments, and I had to wheel her in a wheelbarrow up the street. And then we had a dance. It seemed like everybody in the country smelled the whiskey. We set one jug in the middle of the floor, and I put the other one on the piano. We danced and had fun until all the whiskey was gone. And the kids got the candy, didn't they?

NM: Oh, yes.

That sounds like fun. So was the wheelbarrow a tradition?

JM: Yes, run with a wheelbarrow up the street.

NM: I don't know if that's a tradition or not. They made *us* do it! [laughter]

JM: Well, that was pretty good. But that was a lot of money for me to spend. Whiskey was two half-gallon jugs. They cost maybe fifteen, twenty dollars each. That was a lot of money.

Then it was, yes.

NM: They give me a big shower before we were married, too. I had a nice shower. Yes, I sure did. I got a lot of nice things.

JM: We got a few things.

Did most everybody in town get along, or were there cliques?

JM: No, there was gossip.

NM: Yes, there was gossip, but I don't know as anybody I don't think there

was any viciousness—just petty stuff. The women, that's all they had to do, I guess.

JM: They didn't bother us. We had our own friends and our own relatives.

NM: Mrs. Primeaux was funny. She thought she was just a little bit better than anybody else. She did a lot of gossiping.

JM: They had the store and had more money. We had to charge our groceries and stuff. Then was pretty tough living, I'll tell you. We got canned goods from Perkins and Company in Sacramento. The cans had little dents in them. It was a lot cheaper, so we ordered twenty-five dollars' worth. We had artichoke hearts and all these fancy things, and it was shipped to Red House [station on Western Pacific Railroad, twenty-five miles northwest of Battle Mountain], Nevada. Primeaux, the storekeeper, he held them up for us. I felt bad about it, but I guess he realized that we lived a long time, [because] for years afterwards there were still artichoke hearts down in the cellar. [laughter] We got a lot of groceries for twenty-five dollars.

And then once we . . . the Wilkerson family were leasing off the Sleeping Beauty, and they had a little high-grade streak there. He wasn't going to give that to the count [when the owner came to assay the ore]. Her uncle was pretty smart: he put it in carbide cans—the *good* ore, the real high grade—and we'd take it home in sacks, take it home and put it in the cellar. [But when he put the ore at the mine] in cans, he put some low grade on top of them. The owner would come by, and he sampled the low-grade dirt. They didn't know we got some rich stuff.

Anyway, we got about 1,500 pounds that we took to Reno, pretty good ore. We figured about \$2,000 [was what] we should get out of that. We took it to Nevada Testing Laboratory, and they cut the samples, and they worked it all up and charged us for lots

of assays. And we stayed right there with them. Then they gave us the ore sample to take to another assayer.

We took the sample. I know very well the minute we left that assay office, that fellow called up all his buddies and told them what to give us on that. And we gave the sample to this one assayer, and I know in my own mind he didn't assay it—didn't have time to run it through. He just wrote it down. And all we got out of that was just a few hundred dollars. It was figured out to seventy-five dollars—maybe twenty-five dollars a piece. So we put all the money together, and we bought groceries—grub. We had a Model "A" truck loaded to the hilt with grub. That's all we got out of that.

Oh, gee. That's probably a long drive then, from Reno back to Midas.

NM: It was then.

JM: Uncle Ed and Al drove the truck. Noreen's grandmother was sitting in the front, and I was freezing in the back.

NM: Grandma was in her nineties.

JM: Everybody was stealing from everybody. We had to steal. Well, they'd steal from you! The company would give you twenty-dollar ore: they wanted 20 percent royalties; four dollars milling charge; a dollar hauling; 80 percent recovery. By the time you got through with the thing, [if] we made four dollars a ton, you're lucky. We worked one winter up there mining the ore out and assayed twelve dollars. We threw all the waste in the chute and figured, well, we might as well mill the waste. We might get fifty cents a ton out of it. And that's when her brother, finally, he didn't want anything to do with it. He said no, but we milled it anyway. The waste was better than the ore at fourteen dollars. So it only made a dollar a ton, so he's trying to split that up with four

or five people—you didn't get much [after] pay for [buying] any powder, caps, and fuse. No, we never made anything in the mines. There's people that make money though, in gold.



NM: Talking about the whiskey at our shivaree When we had our dances every Saturday night, you know how the dance hall set up on those cement blocks? Well, anyhow, that's where everybody hid their liquor, because you couldn't take it in the dance hall. You either kept it in your car, or you put it under those posts. And everybody was stealing everybody else's. [laughter] After a dance, why, you'd go outside and have a drink. Never mix it, just drink straight out of the bottle. That's the way everybody did. Oh, gosh, yes.

JM: Old Bob Richardson, had the saloon. I was on a date with Noreen's sister Edna. Then he said to me, "You going to buy a drink, Jack? I know you got five dollars." Well, I didn't like that at all. I had to go buy a drink. That just about killed me—embarrassed me. I'll never forget that.

And [more recently], this one guy, him and I didn't get along He used to say the same thing.

NM: Well, he just loved to torment Jack, the poor man—day and night—and Jack could not take it. But this guy just done that to torment him. He tormented him to death.

JM: It all started with that lot next to him. I was going to bid on it; and when I did, then *he* did; and [then] *I* did. If I'd known what I know now, I would have kept his groceries. But I should have outbid him.

NM: He just liked to get to you.

JM: Yes, he got to me. He got to me, and I told him off. I didn't like it. Oh, that used to make me furious.

NM: [laughter] He knew it, that's why he did it, Jack. He just really tormented him.

JM: Oh, I tell you, I could fight. But that guy I could not stand. I don't like that fellow to this day. He always hugged and kissed that square-dance group. That's one man that I just didn't like to get friendly with. That guy, all he wanted (I don't care if it's on tape or not) he was just out for what he could get from a woman. That's my opinion. He didn't have no respect for the other guy. I'll tell him, too, if I see him.

Was there somebody around who was responsible for the dance hall?

NM: The dance hall, yes, it was a community dance hall, and it was kind of run by the community. But there was somebody in charge, a chairman or whatever. Yes, you had to pay to use it, and no liquor was inside the dance hall. That's why we hid it outside. [laughter]

What would happen to the money? Was it used just for maintenance and that kind of thing?

NM: Yes. They bought the piano with it.

JM: Where's the piano now?

NM: It was down in Kirby's. I don't know where it is now.

I think Bob Unger has it. The story that I got was that when Les stripped the place, Unger went in and said, "You're not touching the piano," and took the piano.

NM: Well, good, I'm glad somebody was there.

JM: Glad he did, yes.

NM: I didn't think about it. I really didn't.

JM: Well, I got nothing to say. I have not been very active up there.

NM: Well, I feel like I don't either, but we own property up there. We have as much say as anybody else.

Sure.

NM: That piano. Let me see if that was donated or if it was bought with

JM: Well, they raised a little bit of money for the restoration of the dance hall.

NM: That was Bob Unger and I.

JM: They tore it [the dance hall] down. I don't know what happened to the money, but they built the firehouse there now.

The building was too far gone?

NM: They let it go too far.

Yes, that was a real shame.

NM: That hardwood floor was so pretty.

Well, that floor is in

NM: Edith's bar [now Don Mellen's saloon], yes.



(The rest of the Murdock oral history consists of an interview Victoria Ford conducted with the Murdocks on July 6 and 24, 1998. Ms. Ford's questions are in italics, while Mr. and Mrs. Murdock's answers are in regular type.)

VICTORIA FORD: *Today is July 6, 1998. I'm here in Winnemucca with John G. Murdock, and his wife Noreen is here, too. We're going to be talking about Midas today. Let's start, Jack, and have you tell me about why you went to Midas and what your first job was.*

JM: The reason I went to Midas, I was working for John G. Taylor on the ranches, and my job was running out. I didn't want to go home to San Francisco, so I met Byron Wilkerson and Al Wilkerson—they became my friends—and they talked me into going to Midas and cutting sagebrush, and we would sell it to family people for eight dollars and twelve dollars a cord.

For fuel?

JM: Sagebrush wood, for fuel.

And this was what year?

JM: [This was] 1933, in the fall of 1933.

So what was happening then, during those Depression years?

JM: Well, the banks were closed. There was no money. I think all I had was \$300. This other man and I, we bought a brand new car, a Chevrolet coupe for \$800. My payments were \$32, and I was only making \$25 a month. And this friend of mine (Ramsey, his name was), he was going to help me pay for the car, but he went to Midas and worked there for the Elko Prince for 10 percent of his wages. Well, he never got paid.

You mean that they only paid him 10 percent?

JM: They only paid 10 percent of the wages. Getchell and the storekeepers were buying up the wages from the miners for ten

cents on a dollar. A lot of the miners left Midas, and the storekeeper was making money off of it. But there was a saloon keeper up there by the name of Pat Murphy. He bought up a lot of the money, but him and Getchell, they were going to go into cahoots on buying up the wages.

How did they “buy” wages?

JM: Well, to buy groceries. If it was \$50, give them a certain percent, give them a note to it. I understood they—Getchell and Primeaux [the storekeeper] and this Murphy—they were going into cahoots. But Murphy outsmarted them and took them to court. He won that case and beat Getchell out of that money. And Getchell made the remark that the mines will never go again. He would see to it, it would never boom again. I don’t know how he figured . . . He had a good geologist by the name of Varny, and I still think that when they wrote up the reports . . . If you read the mining news on Midas in Reno . . .

In the library?

JM: . . . it sounds good, but for some reason or another the geologist quit when they came to a certain part in there. They would never go deep. The camp never went. Well, a lot of people had faith in it. I think the geologist, Varny, put something in there to throw it off. They beat Getchell out of that money. Getchell left and went over to where the Getchell Mine is now.

So when you arrived there in 1933, the banks were closed, and you were just going to cut sagebrush wood for the folks that were left there?

JM: They paid us a little money. Like I said, I went to work over there in the Link Mine. I got a little bit of a payday (wasn’t much), which I paid the man off that backed

me up in the restaurant, and I paid the storekeeper his money.

So you did some mining, too, in addition to cutting wood?

JM: Well, after we sold the wood, we didn’t come out very good. A lot of them couldn’t pay us. They took the wood, and they never paid us.

I see. So then you went into mining?

JM: Well, for instance, there’s one lady—her name was Purdy. Jack Purdy later became the mine inspector in Nevada, but he was working up there as the hoistman [and as either shift boss or foreman, according to Jack Murdock], up in the Miners Gold. She owed us twelve dollars, but we went to collect it from her, and she says, “I’m not going to pay you, because my husband gave Alex (Noreen’s brother) a job.” We got no money out of them; we had to go find some other way to make a dollar. So I went to work in the mine. I think it was giving four dollars a day.

This was the Link Mine?

JM: The Link. I went to work in the Link.

Who owned that?

JM: Getchell.

Did he own everything around there at that time?

JM: Most everything, but the leases had some private ground. The Esmeralda was a mining outfit. He didn’t own that. It belonged to the Pilants. John Pilant. He inherited that from Mr. Coots. There were fifteen mills and ore processing bodies in Midas, fifteen different mills. All different—

from the Elko Prince to the Rex, on out to the Esmeralda. Fifteen of them.

Fifteen altogether? And one of those was the Link that you went to work for?

JM: One of the claims was the Link [that] Getchell owned. Gold was twenty dollars an ounce then. Then [when] Roosevelt became elected, gold went to thirty-five dollars an ounce. They come back, they start up again, because they were mining and milling gold at the Gold and Silver Circle, Getchell was, before President Roosevelt was elected. After he was in, they stopped milling. This was a seventy-five-ton mill, pushing a hundred ton through. And they didn't do much mining outside of cleaning up the dumps at the old stopes. On the Elko Prince, they started sinking down there to go from the nine hundred-foot level down to the thousand-foot level. And [then] the Link, they went down one hundred feet to the five hundred-foot level. The Elko Prince was the deepest; and the Link is the next—that's five hundred. And then the next was the Grant Jackson. That was two hundred feet. Those were the deepest mines in Midas.

So back to the paydays. Well, they weren't giving much pay, but there's a lot of those leases around the country. I couldn't get a job here in Winnemucca, but if you went out to Midas and rented a cabin for five dollars a month and charged a little groceries at the grocery store and sit tight for a few days, somebody will hire you to come and shovel his ore into the truck. And then you could pick up a few extra dollars that way. A lot of them did that.

Then there were the leasers—that's the people that would take a lease from the company on the property, go out and dig, mine the little ore bodies, and they'd have it hauled to the mill. Well, you'd have to have about, in those days, twenty dollars a ton. So gold was twenty dollars an ounce, and you

had to pay a royalty to the company on a sliding scale, 10 percent [and] up. So it'd be one dollar for hauling; four dollars for milling; and then they guaranteed 80 percent of the assay; and then you pay for the assay. So you had to have at least twenty-dollar ore to make a few dollars.

Because of all the costs? And then you had some of your supplies.

JM: Yes, if you can trust the assayer. To me, I think they crooked us. A lot of them [did] in those days.

Was there an assayer right in Midas?

JM: Yes. He lived over there next to the Getchell house, called Smith. He was the assayer, and does other assays, too, all through [that] time. They had an assay shop over there at the mill.

Do you remember his first name by any chance?

JM: Smith . . . Well, there's only one man that I know of that [ever] beat the company out of anything. Then when they started mining the ore up in the Miners Gold, it had a rich stope up there. A lot of the miners were high grading. They put the bar in sacks, tied it on a bucket, and the hoist man would haul it up. Well, then at nighttime, they'd take it home. Well, there was a lot of high grade floating around, so when this Whitey Williamson put his ore through the mill, and it goes up a conveyor belt, and this fellow—I knew him, Happy Hoage his name was—he threw in a sample of this high-grade ore in his control sample. That sweetened up his assay. Then we had a good shipment out of it: it went up. Right after that, the company didn't like that, so they put a screened-in room up there at the end of the conveyor belt so nobody could get in there to doctor up the sample. Whitey

Williamson denies it, but we all know that's how he made it. He made a good little stake out of it.

Let's go back. You started out chopping wood, and that wasn't working for you. So then you went into the Link Mine. What was your first job in the Link Mine?

JM: My first job in the Link Mine, Floyd Keller was the boss. He put me in a stope scraping down the loose muck into the chutes, and he moved me to another one and to another one. It was dangerous—big old holes. They'd been there for years, hanging donagers (Irish expression), hanging over your head. And then they put me down to tramming. That's where you're pushing the [ore] car.

So first you were mucking, which is just shoveling the ore, right?

JM: Yes. Then I started tramming.

OK, and tramming is moving the car?

JM: I put in ten days of *that*. I had enough of that on the graveyard shift, so I got enough money to pay off my debts, and then I quit. Like I say, I was staying with Byron and Alex (their dad had the milk cows), so we moved over to their home. Winter was coming on, and the family milked cows and sold beef for a livelihood. Her [Noreen's] uncle and Byron and Al and I, we went leasing—took a lease off Pat Devine at the Sleeping Beauty Mine. And we leased up there, and we shipped our ore to the company mill. We had a little extra ore, too. We took it to Reno. We sold it to the Nevada Testing Laboratory over there, but I know they crooked us out of it. I can't prove it was, but I say it anyway, because when we got out of there, we watched every move they made. And out of that, we figured

\$2,000 [that we should have been paid]. They said, "Well, you take the sample to any assayer in Reno." The minute we walked out that door, I know they called up every assayer and told them what to give us. We wound up with sixty-five dollars apiece, me and Al and Byron and her uncle. So we just bought some grub and took it to the family.

Wow, so you had it milled right there in Midas, as well as taking some to Reno? Did you do both?

JM: Yes, we did. We did both.

So there was some milling going on in Midas at that time still?

JM: Yes. In the meantime, the Pilants . . . John Pilant [owned the Esmeralda]. The Pilants lived around that mill for quite a few years, and I worked in there, now and then, off and on, for the Pilant family. I seen them single jacking the stopes with Al Johnson, drilling uppers by hand.

OK. And you were single jacking there. Explain what that is.

JM: Well, a single jack is drill steel. You know, you hit it and turn it. Digs upwards. You drill up [or uppers].

And that's where you put the dynamite?

JM: Yes, you drill a hole, and then you tamp it with dynamite and put a fuse and a cap, and you light it. You have to drill a row of holes. You have to have cuts first—one to go off first so the next breaks to it. A lot of the stopes, in the old days, they put all the waste in the chutes and took the ore down the manways, so we started taking out the ore from the chutes and put it through the mill. We had a nice little mill over there milling it.

Because what used to be waste was now worth some money, is that right?

JM: Yes, at the old price of gold, the waste they threw out . . . Well, for instance, we took a lease on the Colorado Grande, and we went up in the old stopes, and we followed on the manway and went into the little things that shot off to the north or the northeast. And we took that ore down the manway and put the waste in the chute. And the assay (I still have the assay) says the ore went twelve dollars a ton in those days, at thirty-five-dollar gold. And the waste . . . my wife's uncle says, "Shall we mill this waste? We might get fifty cents a ton out of it, fifty cents a day. Better than digging a hole and filling it up again." That's when Byron said, "No, that's enough for me," and he left. But that waste went higher than the ore.

Had more value?

JM: More value, went [as high as] \$14 a ton. Well, that would have been about \$140 now, I guess. I showed them to Ken Snyder. So all we ever did there was just work ourselves to death and never got nothing out of it.

Yes, hard work. So let me make sure I've got this right. You went from the Link to the Sleeping Beauty and then to the Esmeralda?

JM: Yes, we leased at the Sleeping Beauty. And then Pat Devine had a mill there, and he was milling all the dumps around there, putting it through the mill. And we leased one of the little holes up there. Got some pretty good ore.

OK, you were leasing on the Sleeping Beauty. And that's when, from that ore you got while you were leasing, you put that through Pat Devine's mill?

JM: No. No, we put that through the company mill.

Was that Getchell's company mill?

JM: Yes, the Gold and Silver Circle Mill.

And then after the leasing on the Sleeping Beauty, then you went to the Esmeralda, is that right?

JM: Yes. I worked off and on for Pilants. And then I did leasing work. We worked shoveling the ore for different individuals.

OK. So you pretty much learned every job. I mean, you went from mucking to tramming to . . .

JM: Mining whatever you could [for] a few days, you know. Like I say, mining was scarce, and work was scarce, and no one had any money. The last job I had in Midas, I worked for the Gold and Silver Circle. That's Getchell's. It was in the hands of receivership. I worked in the mill. I still have two hundred and some dollars coming, wages, from Mr. C.W. Touseaux. I was the last one, and Joe Reynolds (he was the mill foreman) said, "Shut her down. We're shutting it down tonight."

What year was that, do you remember?

JM: We were married in 1937. Noreen could tell you, 1937.

Before the war?

JM: Yes, before the war. It was in the hands of receivership, and Mr. Touseaux said, "Put some gas in my car. I got to leave." The bar of bullion . . . It was a little bar of silver bullion like that, [worth] about \$2,500, I estimated that at. He said, "Look,

this is all I get out of it. You got a cigarette?" And he bummed me out of a cigarette. And I got no pay. His bookkeeper just wrote me out a receipt, he owed me so much money. And then we went from there over to Gabbs, Nevada, to work in that big mine over there during the war.

I see. So then what did you do after the Gold and Silver Circle closed down, between then and when the war started?

JM: Well, we did a lot of everything to make a living. Maybe sometimes I'd go down on the [Wilkerson's] ranch. They had a lot of cows, and they milked cows, and we'd haul this hay from Squaw Valley. We run horses . . . Outlaws, I guess, we were. [laughter]

Outlaws? [laughter] What were you doing as an outlaw?

JM: I'm kidding. We lived a good life up there. We enjoyed it. We never made much money. I think my highest income was five hundred dollars a year. Five hundred, I think we entered with the income tax man one time [census taker]. He came by and wanted to know how much we made.

Then the old man had beef and stuff. All of us did OK. We knew how to live good. So I guess we lived like we used to live—helped each other out a little.

Yes. You made it through the Depression.

JM: [This was] right after the Depression. We were still coming out of it.

NM: We weren't married in the Depression.

JM: Yes, we were—1937 we were married. Those were still tough times. Nineteen thirty-three was the worst. The banks closed, and they started giving back a

little bit of money to the people. When the banks closed, me and my two brothers, we were buckarooing for John G. Taylor, and the boss, Bill Cooper, [cattle superintendent for Taylor] says, "Boy, you boys are smart. You've got one hundred dollars in the postal savings." We had a postal savings account, and nobody could even buy coffee in Winnemucca, but we had one hundred dollars.

Somebody was telling me about that postal savings, that you could go to the post office and put money in a savings account?

JM: Yes. She [Noreen] kept one stub for a dollar. She still has it. (Were we married then?) One dollar postal savings certificate. We never did cash it in, we just kept it.

Yes, so you had some money.

JM: A hundred dollars.

So you kind of worked for companies when they were open and leased and just kind of alternated?

JM: Yes. And then when we moved over from there, I went over to Getchell, and I worked there for a while. Then we went to Burner Hill, and we leased over there and dug and just camped out and tried to make a stake, you know, locate some claims. [I] went out to the Ivanhoe [District, twenty miles southeast of Midas] cinnabar mine, mined [mercury] out there. She [Noreen] cooked out there. We just drifted from one to another, trying to survive.

Did you like the mining?

JM: Oh, yes. I don't care too much for the underground mining. They didn't have good machinery. All the machinery, Getchell brought them over from the Betty

O'Neal out of Battle Mountain. The things was always sticking on the ground, freezing up, fitchering [three-cornered hole, not round, so the drill sticks], causing a lot of trouble. It wasn't like the new equipment. They got machines out there, the dry stopers. They call them widowmakers. You move it up to the ground, and it ratchetted in like this, and the dust would come down, raining on you, just like a snowstorm. Square steel. They call them dry buzzies. Widowmakers.

Because of the dust?

JM: The dust, yes.

So this was before they brought water in to run the stoper?

JM: Yes, before they had the water. The ones with the water has a hole up through the middle of the steel. On the end of the bit is a chisel bit, or a star, and the water shoots out. And that usually plugged up, [the one] with the hole in the middle. With the hole on the side, it didn't plug up so much with the mud. But the dry buzzies, they didn't have no hole, and you just drilled them dry. That's terrible on you. Kill you, from the dust.

Did you have any problem from the dust?

JM: No, not then. I'm eighty-three years old, I don't know what the heck I've got [now]. I polish lots of rocks out here, geodes. I got dust in my lungs, or a spider bit me. I sprayed it with Raid, and I got that in my lungs. I danged near died, had congestion all over my lungs. But that could be from the spider that I sprayed, or the polishing agent when I was polishing these geodes. But I got over it, anyway.

You noticed a difference when they brought in the jacks with the water?

JM: Oh yes. Anyway, we used a lot of hand drilling. We couldn't afford a compressor or a jackhammer, so we drilled by hand. You sharpened the steel up, and you'd single jack. You'd put water down the hole and a rubber mat over it, and you save that and turn it and get it down there deep enough. You hit a little soft ground, you can put an auger in it and go up and down until you get a hole in it so far and put that amount in and blast it. But we did a lot of fooling around—we never made anything.

NM: You made a living.

JM: Yes, made a living. If we didn't make enough, we'd go do something different.

What about Midas itself? You said that there were some people up there that always had faith that there was good ore up in there. Do you feel that way?

JM: I was one of them.

You still feel that way?

JM: Oh yes, yes. I told Ken Snyder that. He'll tell you—he owes a lot to me. I owe a lot to him, because I had faith in him. He believed it. I helped him, gave him good advice. I gave him all my maps. I kept everything. I kept all the maps when they sold the Getchell office [next to the house we bought. That was where the safe was with the maps.]

So did you stop mining after the war started? Did you ever go back to mining?

JM: Well, I went back to claim the locations. We had some property [that we] just did assessment work on. There was a lot of leasing going on.

When World War II came?

JM: Before and after. Up in the hills, I know Otto Alexander, he was a good . . . We called them people chloriders. Chloriding means you take a streak of ore, and you could clean out that streak and keep it clean, and lay a blanket down or something, and pick all the gold ore down on it, and keep your waste separate—that's chloriding—drill alongside the vein and shoot it without blasting the whole thing in.

Otto Alexander was a good leaser, a good chlorider. He would take a bucket and a pan and a little mortar; and he'd go up a hillside and he'll pan, pan—put mortar in the pan, find a little streak. Then he'd dig on it. And he'd go in the old stopes where an ordinary man wouldn't go in. He'd go in and put a piece of steel in there, an old piece of steel that would stick from one side to the other, and then put a wagon over the top. And he'd even drill left-handed or right-handed and blast the ore down and checked all the claims, put it in sacks (high grade), go up to Summit Creek and pan it out up there. And he told me, he said, "I know [there's] a lot of ore up there in Midas," but he's not telling anybody where.

Was that a special skill, to keep it separate like that?

JM: That's what you call chloriding.

Not everybody could do that?

JM: Well, I guess they could if they make their mind up. [If] you had a little streak like that, you sure aren't going to shoot the whole thing down. You'd drill alongside of it and shoot the waste away. Then you'd pry that off, the crack, down on a piece of canvas, and sack it up or put it in cans, carbide cans—a lot of carbide cans that was free up there. You put it in there. And another little trick—sometimes you're leasing from a company, and you have some high grade in the cans. Her uncle would put

a little waste on top of each one of them, so that when the owners come by to see how you were doing, he'd take a sample of the cans, but he didn't know what was down in there. They got off smart: that's the way they did.

And what was the point of doing that? I'm missing that.

JM: If you had good ore, you keep your good ore, \$1,000 a ton of high-grade ore in the can. And they are all sitting out there. The owner comes by, and he wants to see how you're doing. He can take a sample of it. Don't show him. Put a handful of waste on top of each one.

Because you have to give the owner a percentage, right?

JM: Sliding scale, mounts up to 40 to 50 percent.

I see. And so if you put some waste on the top, you don't have to give the owner quite so much.

JM: Then you high grade this and take it home. I commonly took it home. That's the way they did it.

When you're talking about the chlorider taking out just the high grade, that's so very different from today when they're mining big masses of ore.

JM: Well, they have the mill. They can't afford to put the high grade, Vikki, in the mill, because the cyanide leached out the low-grade gold quicker. But you put the high grade in there, it can take a long time for it to eat it up. So that's why they'd rather mix it, put a little waste [with it], so they get more tonnage through.

A whole different process.

JM: Yes. You can't very well run high grade through a one hundred-ton mill, because it's going to go out to tailings. You have to keep it in the mill, a long time in the mill, so the cyanide eats it up. If you put your ring in a bottle of cyanide, it would eat it up in several days. But you got to wait that long. So [rather than] do that, just take a whole lot of low grade and run it through. That's why they had the heap-leach plant. They put the low grade in the cyanide to hold, and the cyanide goes down through the heap leach, and out comes the solution—what they call the pregnant solution. And then that goes through zinc, electrolysis process, and that precipitates it, and they roast precipitates into bullion.

Now, did you ever do any work in the mill, or just the mining?

JM: I was in the mill more.

What did you do in the mill?

JM: Went from the ball man The balls grind the ore up, and then it comes out and goes into the classifier, and that separates it. [Then it goes] back into the pebble mill, and then it goes into the solution tanks and the agitators.

And you worked on that process?

JM: Yes.

What was your job?

JM: [laughter] It's an interesting story. They wanted somebody to work in the mill. They sent me over there, and this fellow says, "This is the ball mill, and do this and do that." Well, the first thing I knew, the ball mill was loading it all out on the floor. I'd shovel it back up and shovel it back up and turn on more water into the solution. But that'd wash it up into that classifier, and that

would puke it out on the other side. And I'd shovel it out, and then I'd have to go around and take samples—every half-hour I had to take samples. I ran all night long. And I was scraping down the launder, my hands was all bleeding. They had a trough, called a launder [trough that catches the sludge from the ball mill to the classifier and then returns it to the ball mill], and I was scraping it out and scraping it out.

We had to mill it by feel. They didn't use the specific gravity—there's a little bowl that you take a sample in, and you weigh it, and that specific gravity is what you hold the grinding slimes to. And what I was doing was turning that water *down* into the classifier, and it would dilute the slimes and send it back up. And then I'd throw it out the side, and I'd turn more water, and I'd run them through the mill. I was just going around and around and around and around. I guess I must have mucked fifty tons that night to get five ton of ore through the mill.

And was that the wrong way to do it?

JM: The wrong way! The right way is you're supposed to put enough ore in the ball mill to grind until it sounds good. It was a "bump, bump, bump." If you put too much water in it, it washes out. You take this little bucket and take the sample of it, and you weigh it to a certain specific gravity—the millwright sets that up for you. And you keep it to that, and you don't have no problem. But if you've just got to go by your fingers and feel the grit Of course, they didn't have any balls; Getchell didn't have no material. They didn't have no pebbles or material—and not enough ore to run it through the mill. You have to run back up to the ore bin and pick it down, pick it down, scrape it down into that, then run back again. By the time you got down there, the ball mill was empty. So, [I was] off balance, fighting it all night.

And it should have gone smoothly, if you had the right amount of ore and the right amount of solution?

JM: Got to be just right, it'd run smooth, yes. When I worked down to Bottle Creek out there at the cinnabar mine for John Etchart's mill, I didn't have no trouble, because we took specific gravity of all the stuff. We run that ball mill, and the other one had to go up through and kick down. Then we roasted the ore.

Flotation . . . I worked out at Rip Van Winkle in a flotation mill.

And where was the Rip Van Winkle?

JM: During the war, right before the war.

But where is that located?

JM: Between Tuscarora and Elko. It's a silver, lead, and zinc mine out there.

So part of the problem with the mill was the poor equipment, is that right? The equipment wasn't that good?

JM: They didn't have any money to operate on. They didn't even have timbers, Getchell didn't. They were just robbing the old stopes. All them dumps you see is gone in Midas—they milled all of them. All the Elko Prince, a thousand foot, they took all that dump out of there, and they milled it. Wells Cargo, Joe Wells, he's the one that took the contract; he milled all that ore for the company. I think he was only getting fifty cents a ton. I doubt if the ore even run a dollar a ton. But that's where he got his start [in] Wells Cargo, from up there. Well, they had a good outfit. Did you ever see a picture of the camp up there?

Yes.

JM: Big, nice. The Grant Jackson Mill, blacksmith shop. And then when they folded up in the hands of receivership, my father-in-law was the constable, and they told him, "Look after it." They sold the mill off, I think, for three hundred dollars. Joe Reynolds got the machine shop. And the house that sits over there, we bought it for three hundred dollars.

And all that happened before the war, is that right? It went into receivership and closed before the war?

JM: Yes, just about. I had to leave right after we bought [the Getchell house] . . . just before the war. Well, no, *during* the war, because I left in 1943. See, it would be 1942—the start of the war. Then the government stopped all gold producing for strategic materials.

Right. So they had to mine strategic materials instead of gold.

JM: Yes, strategic. And then we tried manganese, looking for manganese properties. That was a strategic mineral. We didn't find anything.

So, tell me what branch of the service you were in.

JM: U.S. Marine Corps. I was a good one.

Where did you serve?

JM: South Pacific, in the Battle of Peleliu [South Pacific Island, part of the Palau group of islands] and the Battle of Okinawa, and five months in North China. It was all right.

Do you get together with any of the other veterans from around this area?

JM: No. A few, but not in my outfit, though. Her brother was killed in the Second Marine Division.

NM: A few of your friends have been up to visit us, Jack.

JM: Oh, one come through. I correspond with two or three now. One died. The way to talk about the war together, you've got to ask questions. That's the way to make it come to you.

Then it comes, yes. You served from 1943 to 1946? Is that when you were gone?

JM: I went in December 7, 1943. She knows the date when I got out.

And you got out after it was over?

JM: Yes. When the war ended, and the Japanese signed the peace treaty on Okinawa, they were going to ship us back to the South Pacific and some to China. I told my Colonel, "If I can't go home, I want to go to China." So I got to go to China. Those chaps were still at arms. They'd salute you and everything. But they're peaceful people, they didn't bother anybody. Then I got five months in China.

Have you been watching President Clinton's visit to China?

JM: No, I get disgusted with him.

Oh, do you? You haven't even been watching his trip?

JM: I don't care for him. He should be taking care of business here.

I thought maybe you'd be interested in China, since you'd been there.

JM: No, I was at the little town of Tan Cu, then I got to go to Tientsin. Then I was on a water point between Tientsin and Tan Cu—a hundred of us there. I was in the water depot, they called it, trying to distill some water for the troops, because the water they had in a well . . . It was freezing weather up there. Tanks were frozen; the water froze. And I said to the lieutenant, "Why can't we just chlorine it?"

"This country's so old, they found human bacteria 2,000 feet down. People have been living and dying and dying. You've got to distill the water, *then* chlorine it," [he said].

I finally got disgusted with it. Couldn't get no parts. I went to the radio shack, and I had the radio man call up Tientsin. Boy, the next day, here come a convoy out there with the big shot, in my office. He said, "Don't do that no more." I said, "I had to get some parts. I couldn't get no response." But anyway, I got evacuated out of there. When I got down there, they had all these young kids in there from San Diego. I was supposed to get a Samurai sword, but they had them all.

Oh, you never got one?

JM: No, they offered me a hat. I said, "I don't want it. I got my rear end, that's enough. They can keep their swords." So, no use fighting about it.

So when you came back, was Noreen living here in Winnemucca?

JM: No, she was in Midas [in] that house over there that we bought for three hundred dollars.

NM: The Getchell home, sitting on the corner over here.

JM: We had two kids raised up there. Paul Sweeney pulled us up to Midas on a team and sleigh when I came home.

NM: I went out to meet him on skis.

JM: I kind of, in a way, didn't feel like I *wanted* to come home. Everything was so good in the service—free lunch and telling you what to do and everything. Then we got to San Diego and got a discharge. Hey, we're all standing outside, lost.

Not knowing what to do with yourself?

JM: And, finally, some sergeant gave us hell. He said, "You wanted out! Now you're out. Get the hell out of here!" That's the way the send off was. And then you come home, you don't know how everything is.

Quite a shock.

JM: Yes.



What did you do for work when you first got home, then?

JM: Well, we didn't do much of anything. We helped a fellow tear that mill down, my brother and I, the company mill.

That was the Gold and Silver Circle?

JM: Yes, we tore it down. Paul Sweeney bought the mill, and he sold the lumber out and sold this out and sold that out. We helped them people. They paid us wages to help him. And this fellow that bought some of the lumber, he was so greedy, he looked down the mill and saw another big timber down there, and he dropped this end on my brother—a great big timber, fourteen inches—dropped it. My brother said, "If you want to get this, why don't you get some more help?" And this fellow, the boss, said, "Well, if you don't like it, you know what you

could do." My brother thought he wanted to fight, so he quit. So I said, "I quit, too." Crazy.

That same fellow, he built a mill up the canyon, the Kassebaum, and he made money building a mill in California. He built this mill and hired me and another fellow to help him build the mill. After he got the mill all built and the gold was coming off of the plate (you could see the gold amalgam on the plate), this Kassebaum deliberately stuck a wrench up in the gear and broke the gear. He said, "Close her down."

Why?

JM: Because he had a man that was backing him, a chemist. And that chemist felt bad about it. He said, "I had dreams of this here. I wanted to get an assay office up here, and I wanted to do all this." He had money, and this fellow [Kassebaum] did it just to buy and sell. Sell it, that's all he did it for. He made money on doing it. See, he took him [the chemist]. He made money on that stamp mill—just on falseness, took advantage of somebody. He was clever that way. I seen him kick that bar up there and break the teeth. Well, that's the end of that mill.

Yes, that's the end of that job, too.

JM: Right. So after that, Miners Gold was rich at times; still rich. There's a lot of good gold in the Miners yet—a lot of gold there.

Do you have some property out there now?

JM: No more. Sold it all to Midas Joint Venture.

Sold it all. But you had some, all these years?

JM: Yes ma'am. What did you say, honey?

NM: We have property up on the hill.

JM: A block of twelve lots. Only twenty-five by a hundred, yes. We sold all our lots off.

We finally sold them all, and then we turned around and bid on some from Elko, and we paid \$1,800 for some more. Crazy! I wish we didn't sell them. We would have had control up there and keep everybody out. Because land is wealth. You might not have no money, but you've got wealth if you've got land. After we sell them, what good is the money? You have no more money, you have no more land. So don't sell land, keep it.

Did you work any of your claims up here after the war? Did you lease, or did you work on your own?

JM: Well, I'll tell you the truth, we had a claim in her name. We kept that claim for forty-two years, and you have to do one hundred dollars worth of work a year on it. So we done assessment work. We hired a bulldozer. What's that old guy that lived down the canyon with all the kids? We gave him one hundred dollars; he would go in there and didn't do nothing but sit there. The county [required] assessment work, so I mucked the tunnel. I don't know how many years we mucked the tunnel out—fifty dollars a day wages, two days, one hundred dollars to do it. We did the work, and I got to the point [where] I can't keep on. For forty-two years—I'm getting tired of filling out this thing and doing the assessment work.

I begged . . . We had companies look at it, but they'd just look at it and didn't do anything. So when the price of assessment work went to two hundred dollars, that's when I said, "Give it up."

Ken Snyder come in, and I traded it all to him, and we took a royalty off. What gets me, Vikki, he drilled one hole there, but they [the archaeologists] won't let him drill no

more, because it's a historical mill site. If he goes underground, he can drill to get over there. So how am I going to get any money out of it? I said I ought to sue the archaeologists for depriving me out of my life savings, life income. "Well," he said, "you probably could, but it's going to take a long time."

And is this part of the BLM rules, the government rules, that it's a historical site now, and so that limits what they can do there?

JM: That's right. See them stakes over there, the mills over there, the wrecks. I can't drill there. Archaeologists won't let us drill. They said it was a foundation. That's what he told us. That's not right. That's crazy! They could go up to the site over from the side there and then go down.

But you never used to have those kinds of rules?

JM: No, never had them before. We were here before the Taylor Grazing Act. We were free. Nobody said anything. Here, you could walk out on government land, and they never say nothing, because I never knew where the boundaries were. No, it was better before. Fewer rules. We were better off. But you get to have some control, because we're getting too many people.

Have you been back up there lately, to Midas?

JM: I got to go there any day [now]. I have to turn the water out on my trees I got up there. But we had just a cold, miserable year. Then the mosquitos came, [was] the reason I can't go out in there. Now, I'm free to go up, then the gnats come out. You got to go up before the gnats come out. I like it up there. I want to go. Ken said he'd take me down to the mine.

Give you a tour of it, huh?

JM: Yes. Did you go underground?

I'm probably not going to go underground, but I'm going to go tour the rest of it.

JM: Oh, go underground.

I'm a little claustrophobic.

NM: Oh, I am too. I don't care to go underground, either.

JM: Oh, I don't think you would get claustrophobia. You're not closed in. It's a big tunnel. It's a big, big, big tunnel. But the only thing is, Byron says he went in, and the tractor pulls you down a decline like this. But he was sitting backwards by the exhaust pipe, and he got a little sick from the fumes—see, the diesel smoke. But they got big fans that sucks the air out.



JM: I think it was mostly handwork. The big mine, the Elko Prince, was jackhammer liners. That's the big steel, inch-and-a-quarter steel. They sunk one thousand feet. And then the other little mines, the small holes are single jack, they drill them and sink. They had old, broken-down machines when I was up there, and the only good machine I had was over there at the Esmeralda, what they called a Thor Cochese jackhammer, and you drill uppish with that. That's an illegal way to do it, but that's the way they did it then. We never had no good equipment, no *good* machines—all those machines were just pitching and sticking.

Did you have any mucking machines?

JM: I ran a mucking machine up at that Riley Mine. That wasn't in Midas, though.

And Riley is where?

JM: Over by Getchell.

Over by where Getchell is now?

NM: You told her about Getchell?

JM: I told her I was getting pretty good on that thing. I was running in there, I was a hotshot mucker. I was a mucking rat. Boy, she jumped the track and almost got me against the wall. So I wasn't so cocky after that.

Because how does a mucking machine work?

JM: It runs on air.

It's an air-powered shovel?

JM: Yes, it's on wheels, and with levers—one goes forward and one will pull the bucket back. Just run it, swish, up like this, and you come back and up and all overhead, overhead, back into the car. You get a big boulder on there, you got to watch out [that it doesn't] go down and fall off on your head. And if you jump the track, you have to be skilled enough [on] how to put that bucket down to lift up the rear wheels and stick it back on. It took a little experience. I learned. And one fellow was running a mucking machine in there, and a rock come down and hit him on the head and killed him, right there. Big hole up there.

NM: Right in his temple.

JM: John Mayeroff sent me in to muck it out. Well, I did it. I went in and mucked it out, and every time I was back [out], I thanked the Lord that I got out of there. We lived dangerously.

It was dangerous work?

JM: It was, yes. You can't be too reckless with mucking machines. You're too close to the wall, and you've only got . . . standing on a little platform on the mucking machine, like here, and the wall was here. You run up and get that other [one] and come back. If that thing hit a rock, it was going to fall on you. I never put a greenhorn kid in there unless he knew what he was doing, never let him do it.

It saved some effort, because it was air powered, but you had to really know what you were doing not to be hurt by it, yes?

JM: Yes. I guess they got enough machines up there at the Snyder Mine. I imagine, I haven't seen them. But they've got them big jumbos. They all drill up on those machines. But that's a rapid, noisy son-of-a-gun, going down like that.

Run on a slant.

JM: Yes. When we were on a drift, we put a steel bar up here. [We] got to measure back from the wall, with a timber on the bottom and a wedge on the top. You cinch it up, tighten it up, screw jack, and then you put the arm on, then put your jackhammer on, and then you drill your back holes first. Drill your breast holes in the tunnel. And then the cuts, then the lifters. Light the cuts first, angled down at forty-five [degrees]. Breast straight across, back straight across. Lifters move all the muck out. [demonstrating rows of holes]

You drill the back holes up here [at the top], this way, then the next hole straight in. You got to get the ground off, so they break; then this way and this way and that way. Then you turn it over and drill the lifters next. So then you shoot these cuts first, and then this drops down. And all the muck is there, and then they blast the lifters back this way.

But they use the burn now. They drill one hole here [and shoot the center hole first, the burn hole] and another there and another here and another here and another *here* [in a circle around the central hole]; and then shoot this, this, this, this; and then it breaks through [to] this hole. [indicating intersecting directions] It makes a hole this big.

You have to have something to break to. Just by drilling a hole in there, straight, all you've got is a shotgun hole—it will shoot straight out. Stand alongside of it like that.

You've got to have it go up and down.

JM: It has to have something to break to. If there's a slick face, one hole there isn't going to do nothing but shoot out. But to make a burn, they put all these in here [indicating around a center] and blast them, it shoots out and makes a burn hole this big around. Then this will break this to this one [indicating all the way around]. Usually they do. I noticed, I think, out to the Snyder Mine, they mark them—where to drill—with paint. And the miners will drill the holes there, so there's no mistake.

And then the different grounds. They [the tramp miners] knew how to drill the holes. They knew how to blast it. They all had their own system. They're good, the tramp miner. Where the greenhorn miner, they just know you put them with another miner, [because] they wouldn't know how to break the ground. All rocks [are] lots different. The tramp miner, he's an expert. They don't have no tramp miners no more.

And one of the things that I'm hearing is that they're starting to do some underground mining again, and that some of these things that you're explaining to me, people don't exactly know how to do this anymore, because they've never done it. They did so much of the surface mining.

JM: Well, now, see, up at the Snyder Mine in Midas, they have big culverts around for air—one going in and one coming out. Years ago they just had a two-inch air pipe that just turned the air on and blew it out, up the shaft. When you go in there—smoky. You get a headache, [and it could] kill you. Then they came out with a red rubber sock you hang on wire down there. It blew air in and blew it out. But now it's like living in a hotel, the air's so good. It isn't like it used to be.

I'll never forget one time over there at the Eastern Star, I had a nice row of holes all drilled out in a manway, and I said to the fellow down below, "When you get to your hose, turn on the air up the manway." I had, oh, about nine of them black fuses a-hanging, and by that time, a lot of black smoke. And he came by and turned the air on, and it went swoosh. I don't know what happened, but I had a running fuse. So I dove right through the hole, and they had the steel all sitting up. And I cut my wrists. Then I realized what happened. I went back. I couldn't find where I left, the smoke was so bad. I lit what I could, and I got out of there. I had a messed up round the next day. That was enough for me. Let the other guys figure it out.

So would you have had some that didn't go off, then?

JM: Oh, yes, we had a lot of holes that don't go off, but when you go back, you be careful you don't drill into them. You pull out the fuse and re-shoot them over. Yes, I always worried about that.

What's a running fuse?

JM: Well, that's when you light the fuse, and it goes like that.

Oh, it just goes really fast?

JM: Defective. I never experienced anything like that. No, but in the Marine Corps, there was always engineers in demolition that were teaching us about explosives, and I stayed away from them, because I knew enough not to bother. [One] took a blasting cap with a piece of fuse, and cut it off just about like so [short], and he'd light [that] with a cigarette and throw it. I would *never* do that! Wait till the time comes. Well, it went off in his face, killed him. Two inches is not very much.

NM: Not enough time.

JM: Forty-five seconds to the foot. He'd light it with a cigarette. Well, he was a Marine veteran, too.

Did you deal with explosives at all in the military?

JM: Yes. I was in demolition. We trained, and we did all that. And on Okinawa, I carried forty pounds—twenty-pound satchel here and twenty on this side plus two grenades, and somebody else would carry caps and the fuse. And we carried them across the island till we got tired of them. That's the first time they said, "We need somebody over here to blow a cave." I'd get up and get my gear and ammunition. I blew a pill box up. You didn't want the Japs to get in there at night. I put my two charges in and blew it up. All I did was make it bigger! Well, you know, I thought I heard a noise in there. I thought I heard a noise.

So that experience mining really helped you in the military?

JM: Yes, it did. Unfortunately, it cautioned me. I thought I heard a noise. The next day somebody said, "Murdock, there's a dead Okinawan in there." Nobody was in there, but he must have been hiding in

there. I never went to look to see. But one fellow, Sergeant Blan, over the side of the cliff tied on the rope, the Japs were all in the caves. [He] tied the satchel charge on the rope and hung it down, lit. Japs would pull out the fuse. So he pulled it back up and fixed them. He put *two* fuses in. Lit one, stuck it down in the sack/pouch, and lit the other one. They wouldn't pull out the second one. Then he blew that cave. They were right underneath us.

Amazing. Did you think that when you were going into the military you'd have anything to do with caves and explosives?

JM: No, I thought I'd have a station someplace in some outpost and be with a good outfit. I never thought I'd deal with this.

The Asian theater was one of the worst, wasn't it?

JM: Well, they were all pretty bad. Peleliu should never have been invaded or anything—that was a mistake. Policy, I think, said we didn't need to take Palau Islands. We could bypass it, because we got the Japanese Navy knocked out. But he said, "Awe, we scheduled for it. We can take it in two days." Kill[ed] a lot of men.



JM: Around that side of the hill over there is where Bob Richardson, the young fellow, worked a lease. They took out about \$30,000—the only ones that really made any money, that I know of that could make some money—this young kid and him. The rest of the hills and all of the dumps was all milled. They pushed it all through the mill.

Jack, we've talked a little bit about the different mills, but why don't you start and name the mills and describe them a little bit, the ones that were there when you were there.

JM: Well, I can go back to name them all in Midas. The first one was the Elko Prince. It burned down in 1911.

So that was gone by the time you got there, is that right?

JM: That was burned down. The Rex was a mill—that was down, and all that's left was the stamps. Then we go on down to the Gold and Silver Circle Mill. That's the one that was operating at Getchell.

That was there, the Gold Circle?

[The Gold Circle Consolidated operated by Getchell was losing money in 1932 when the banks failed. It was reorganized into the Gold and Silver Circle Mining Company in 1943, which took over all the assets and liabilities of the Gold Circle Consolidated Mines, Betty O'Neal Mines, and Cash Mine.¹]

JM: Silver mill. That was operated by the Getchell Company when I was there in 1933. Then the Esmeralda Mill was run by the Pilants. Then all the other little mills around there—they weren't operating, but there was a lot of little leases working around the country. And they all were [milled] at the Getchell Gold Circle Mill in Midas.

Okay, so the leasers brought their ore to the Gold Circle Mill.

JM: The leasers. The miners took a little lease on the Gold Circle mining properties—so many feet and they would mine it, and they would haul the ore over to the mill. They had to have about \$20 gold (that was an ounce of gold in them days), because they had to pay \$4 milling charge, \$1 hauling, then the assays, and the caps and powder. They only guaranteed you 80 percent, which they were recovering 90 percent. Then they took out moisture—

that doesn't leave much. And then you had to pay a royalty on a sliding scale. If you made eight or nine dollars off an ounce of gold, you were lucky.

After all this overhead.

JM: Yes, ma'am.

OK. So they only guaranteed you 80 percent, but they were actually probably recovering about 90 percent?

JM: Yes. I was told when I worked there, when we was running the Elko Prince dumps through the mill, if the tailings would assay twenty-five cents a ton, the bosses were down there thinking, "What's wrong? That's too much—two bits a ton." Of course, they hauled *some* of the ore down that was going for only fifty cents a ton. They milled all the dumps of the Elko Prince. All the dumps was put through this mill.

Through this Gold Circle Mill?

JM: Yes, ma'am. And Joe Wells, he was the contractor. He hauled the ore. That's where Wells Cargo got started. I don't know how much a ton he was getting, but he wasn't getting very much. But they milled the whole thing.

But when I went to work in this mill, I didn't know anything about milling, but they were going to teach me. So the mill fellow on shift said, "This is the way it is, and this is the way it all is, and it's all yours." Well, I made it through the night, and the next day was a *little* better, but it was the same thing. No one told me what to do. The mill guy came by one day, and he says, "I'll tell you how to learn something about a mill. All you have to do is follow the pipes, and you'll know what's going on." Which is the way to check it out, you know, where the solution's going and where the pulp is going.

What did that mean, "follow the pipe"?

JM: The pipes that carry the cyanide solution. After the ore comes through the crusher, it goes up into a bin and down through another ore bin that feeds the ball mill, and that ground up the . . . should be about, I think about 75 percent of the gold was caught in the ball mill cyanide solution. Then the other, the fines, would go in the classifier and into another mill they would call the pebble mill. They had pebbles: they hauled rocks up from Red House, Nevada, because they didn't have money enough to buy the other ones that came from Australia. And then that pulp would go down the launder, out, past the classifier, out into a thickener. That's a tank that goes around slowly and pulls all the slimes down in the middle.

There's a Triplex pump on the bottom that pumps it out and pumps it into an agitator. That's where they use air to agitate the cyanide solution to make it more active. They put air into it [at the agitator], and then from there it went into another thickener; and out of that thickener, [it] went into another agitator and then into another thickener and then an agitator. And by that time you got all the gold out of it. We'd have to take samples to see which was the value of each thickener.

And then the pulp would go on down to a big press, and that press would go around and suck up all the pulp (oh, I forget the name of it). It would suck the cyanide solution out; and when it got on the other side, it would blow out, it would drop the pulp down, and that went out in the tailings. Now, the solution that carried the gold is called the pregnant solution.

And that's the cyanide?

JM: That's the cyanide. And that went into a tank that had canvas leaves in it. And these canvas leaves sucked this solution up

through it, because there's still mud and dirt. And that mud would stay on the leaves. And [when] that came out, it'd be clean pregnant solution. It'd go through a press with leaves in it with zinc dust, and that's what stopped the gold, because it was called a precipitate then—black mud. Then when it got full, in a week or two, they would open it up and take it out and take that precipitate out of the press [and wheel it to the refiners and mix with fluxes, put it in a kiln and roast it. Then they poured the slag off, then the bullion.]

So, the solution, when it went through, was barren solution. It's still rich in cyanide, so they use that around for the mill, and we'd have to add a little more cyanide to it to bring it up to par. We didn't let any solution get away. Once in a while we lost a little solution. It'd go down; and then the cows would drink it. It'd kill a cow right away. Instantly, they'd never raise their head up once they take a drink out of it.

Then we'd have to sample all the solutions, and, like I said, if the solution was twenty-five cents, they'd be scratching their head. That's a lot of waste. Should be around two cents or three cents for that low grade of ore. But the ore was only running around seven dollars in them days, and that's when gold was at thirty-three dollars an ounce.

So anyway, I put in two or three weeks there, and over in the powerhouse, it caught fire and burned down. It was cold, and to keep warm, they had an oil barrel for a stove and a bunch of rags around [that] caught fire and burned down. But the big engines were still running. So, of course, they had to shut the mill down. Then there's a fellow, he got a big Cadillac engine (I think it was a Cadillac), and he mounted it up in the rafters. He run that engine so it would turn the thickeners, when it [the powerhouse engines] wasn't running. The thickener would stop that goes around, all that slime would become solid, and you couldn't turn the big thickeners. So they'd have to take air

and blow them and blow them, for hours and hours and hours, to get the muck all slimy again, so they could turn it around. So they put that engine up there, and the big line shaft that turned all the thickeners.

While this power was out?

JM: When the power was out. But finally they kept doing that until they got ready again to put the mill in operation. By that time I was getting familiar with it all. I had to run up that a lot of times and turn these thickeners every so often—by hand, these big wheels—so it wouldn't stop. Well, so we weren't getting any money. We weren't getting any pay.

You weren't getting paid? How did they have it set up?

JM: Well, it was in the hands of receivership. Mr. Touseaux was in charge of it, and everybody seemed to be willing to work, but they weren't getting paid. Finally, one day they came over and he said, "We're going to have to shut the mill down. We're going to close her up."

Mr. Touseaux had a little bar of bullion like that—I figured about \$2,500 [was] all that was in it, and [when] I asked him about pay. "Well," he said, "I haven't got no money. I ain't even got no money to buy cigarettes." So I gave him a cigarette. I even put gas in his car from out of the company, and that was the last I seen of him. He went over to Gabbs Valley and went to work over there for the magnesium plant.

The bookkeeper gave me a statement. I've got a couple of hundred and some dollars coming in wages. Still got that—waiting for the money. And I said to myself, "This mill is never going to run again. I can see that nobody's ever going to get beat out of their money." I didn't like the way they operated. I wasn't going to sabotage it, but I dropped an iron ball (about a four-inch iron

ball) in every one of those thickeners before I shut it down. Because when they went around, that rake would rake that ball down in this cone, and stop, to plug the hole. And the only way they could ever get it out, they'd have to muck out them—hundreds of tons of muck out of each one of them tanks. But the best part of it They sold the mill, and then they tore the mill apart, so it didn't do any good by putting those in there.

You did all that, and it never paid off anyway.

JM: Never paid off anyway.

Did anybody ever know?

JM: I should have taken some equipment for my wages. But it was in the hands of receivership, and you could get in trouble, just the same, because they never questioned it. But one fellow there, he bought the machine shop: I think he paid seventy-five dollars. The man that bought the mill, I think he paid three hundred dollars.

My father-in-law was constable up there, and the fellow there that was in charge was selling it off. (I forget what you call him.) He told my father-in-law, "You take care of everything here, and I'll sell you that house that's over there for three hundred dollars." So I didn't have much money, but I did come up with three hundred dollars and gave it to my daddy-in-law, and he bought that house, the Getchell house. So that was it.

So you were there from 1933 up to, what, 1942?

JM: In 1943 I went into service.

So you were in Midas for ten years.

JM: Oh, yes. All my life I had interest in Midas, property or something.

And during that whole ten years, you were working in the mill?

JM: No. I went over to Rip Van Winkle and worked in the mill over there—that's the lead and silver mine over by Elko. Then I went to the Ivanhoe District—that's the cinnabar. But our headquarters was in Midas. Then I worked over at Getchell [mine], now and then.

But you lived in Midas all that time and worked around?

JM: Yes, we just worked out.

OK. But once they closed down the big mill at Midas, that was it for work there?

JM: That was it. That was all.

None of the small ones were running at that point?

JM: No. Well, the Rand Company over there, Eastern Star, they put up a flotation mill Lenox Rand, or the Rand Company, put up the flotation mill, and then he hauled a little of the concentrates out. And then the Pilants had the mill down along the canyon. That was before they shut down. They were hauling tailings from the Coots Mill, [the stamp mill at the mouth of Midas canyon], up to [the Gold Circle Mill in] Midas and run through that mill. That's before I went to work in the mill. They paid it all in tailings. And then after that, Pilants' Esmeralda Mill kept running and mining, and they done a lot of mining and milling there for quite a few years.

Did you ever work on that one?

JM: No, but we put some ore through it. I never worked it, but I worked in the mine. I also worked in the mine over there at the Eastern Star.

OK. How would you compare those two mines—the Eastern Star and the Esmeralda?

JM: Well, the Esmeralda was old, old workings. It's all stoped out, and I was working in the big glory holes. The Eastern Star was, I guess, a couple of hundred feet deep and water, a lot of water in there.

A lot of water? Hot water?

JM: No, it was cold water. They pumped it out, finally pumped it down. They ran some drifts in there. Then we raised up on it. It had pretty good values, but we had trouble drilling. The drill machines they had there weren't the best.

What did they have, do you remember?

JM: Ingersol Rand, Gardner Denver. Then they come out with a Thor Cochese. And on the old, old Elko Prince, they had big liners. That's with about an inch-and-a-quarter steel. They had a big bar set up and the arm on it, and they cranked them in. Then they had the stopers. I still have a stoper out in the yard, I think, from over there.

What is a stoper?

JM: That's where they drill uppers. That's a dry buzzy.

Drill uppers for the blast?

JM: Yes. This dry buzzy—they called them dry buzzies or widowmakers, because they're dry . . . the dust. There's no hole in it to use water. Later they come out with some with water. But they was all brought in from the Betty O'Neal [Mine out of Battle Mountain] . . . a lot of that Getchell stuff. They were half wore out.

So it wasn't new equipment. You weren't getting new equipment?

JM: No, the only new equipment I saw was a Thor Cochese jackhammer at the Esmeralda. That was pretty good. You can hold them in your arm and drill uppers, and it'll beat you to death on your chest. Boy, they worked hard. I don't know how we ever lived.

Hard work.

JM: Dangerous! My brother and my brother-in-law, they were working in the Esmeralda. They were drilling upper holes in this big room, standing there, pushing up a jackhammer, drilling up there. A slab [could have] come down and killed them. We were just lucky.

Were you doing any timbering or any cement work to hold those slabs up?

JM: No, we didn't do anything like that. We put timber up as stull. Years ago, the Wilkersons and the freighters used to haul cottonwood trees over the mountain, down to the mill, and to the mines for timbers. Well, cottonwood poles, they rotted out quick. By the time we were up there, some of those old timbers was gone, and so the leasers [would] go down these narrow stopes, and they put in any old timber with lagging over it just to stand on, and drilled on them—you know, and single-jack drill. But the timbers would cost more than the gold they were getting out, so they used a lot of railroad ties and stuff. Well, a railroad tie don't last long. Out to the Colorado Grande, I worked in there, and they used railroad ties for timbers. The track was up and down, up and down. I had to take a bar and bar the car out. No mine inspectors, no safety.

You didn't have any safety equipment at all?

JM: No.

Did you wear hard hats?

JM: Oh yes, we had a hard hat. [I only used it] when I went to work at the Link. I went over to the Warren Store, and I bought this hard boiled hat. They were black canvas, tarred and tarred, layer after layer of black material. They were made for Swedes. They're round, so it fit you here, and it fit you here [indicating front and back]. And you could put your fist right up each side of them, trying to keep your hat on.

It would be tight in the front and the back and open on the sides?

JM: Yes, it was made for a Swede. (No offense to the Swedes. They got a round head, and their nickname used to be "square heads".) That was [what we had for] the hard hats. First we had those canvas hats like these with a light on it when we went in the mine.

But no protection with just some canvas.

JM: Oh, you can't do that now. And they had candles—put a candle up there.

Did you have hard-toed shoes?

JM: All I had was The first time I put [on] a hard-toed shoe, and I pulled a rock down off the muck pile and rolled down on my toe, and it went over the hard toe and hit me on the instep, so that wasn't very good. You know, they didn't fit very good, and try to walk and tram [in those shoes that are uncomfortable], and the hard hat that don't fit. Now it's a lot different. They've got good stuff now.

Yes, they have hard hats that fit and shoes that fit.

JM: Oh yes, they got good stuff now. One time I was sitting over there with a boiled hard hat. We was sitting in the hoist room. I had my hat on like this, and it had the brim on it. A rock fell down and hit my head, and boy, that was kind of like a magnet. That cut me, that flap coming [in] back here like that. So I fixed that: I cut it [the back bill] off. So when you bump your head, it don't come out here, and you don't cut the back of your neck. So then, they come out later with skulls that went all the way around. See, that bill was only to shed the water when it was wet, but then it did protect your ears. But the skull cap didn't protect your ears or the back of the neck—it's more of a canvas cap. I think now they got good caps that fit down, protect you. Much better today.

A lot better equipment today.

JM: Better equipment, safer, too. Then we had to work in that cloud of smoke—so bad.

The powder smoke after a blast?

JM: Yes, so thick. I worked at the Riley Mine. Four years I worked up there. I was an electrician. And powder smoke would be so thick in there, the miners would just have to sit down and eat that stuff, sitting, like eating stinking onions. I don't see how some of them ever took it.

Didn't they go out when there was a blast? They stayed down there?

JM: They would go out but [then] come back in to drill on the next shift.

Oh, and the powder smoke was still in the air?

JM: I was working in a Colorado Grande tunnel. I had one adit. This other

young fellow, he worked on the left; and the other one (he's a big husky guy who went to the university, and he just had to put in some time in the mines. I was pretty husky, and he was huskier) And I was mucking away and breathing them fumes, and I couldn't hardly take it. I had a load, and he came over, and he looked and said, "I'm stronger than you, and I can't get my car loaded up. And you've got yours loaded!" He stood there and started weaving on the car. He was getting gassed. He said, "Let's get out of here!"

So he went out quick, and I went out, and then I noticed that I was starting to get sick. We were not too soon to get out in that fresh air—staggered out, and the fresh air just about killed me. My heart was just in my throat, pump, pump, pumping away. I'll never do that again! Go out slowly. Don't go out in that fresh air too quick. We went home. I come in, and my wife said I looked just like a ghost. I didn't want to go back anymore. I didn't go back. That gas was so bad, the powder gas, especially breathing that fumes. The only way to blow it out was just an air hose, a two-inch pipe that blew it out.

And they have huge pipes today.

JM: Now they've got big ones, yes, great big ones.

So you were not getting enough oxygen?

JM: No, we didn't get nothing.

You were getting the smoke from the powder and gasses from down below?

JM: Yes. Well, when you're shoveling it out, and you're shoveling in the muck—oh, stink! It was stinking onion, rotten onions—gas, and the headache. Terrible headache. You want to get even with somebody, just

take a little dynamite and rub in his cap. Boy, his head'll come off.

Really? Dynamite gives you a headache?

JM: Yes. It's nitro, nitroglycerin. No, I could never do it now. Now they've got better conditions, so if you're going to go to work for wages, go to work for a good company where they got the Twin Creeks or Getchell Mine or Midas [Joint] Venture—somewhere [that] they do the mining properly [with] good safety.

Yes. What you were experiencing, was that kind of what it was [like to be] mining in those days? That was as good as it got?

JM: The poor man's way, because they didn't have any money to pay us, but people were willing to work. They would get whatever they could out of the miners. So they'd sit you over here and say, "Do this," or "Do that." Either you wanted to be a miner or you want to do a good job of mucking . . .

Just like Ira Wiser said, this odd guy. He wanted to hit the boss up for a job, and he said, "I'm no miner, and I'm not much of a mucker, but I want a job." So he got the job.

So then from Midas, part of the work you did around there was at Getchell Mine, too?

JM: I worked at Getchell two times. We lived there once for two years, but I worked in the mill. I started out on the bull gang, then I became a lead man in construction, welding and stuff. We moved all that equipment around in the mills with B-B hoists.

But Getchell Mine . . . because I think sometimes it's confusing, since Getchell did so much mining in Midas. The Getchell

Mine itself is about thirty miles from Midas, correct?

JM: Yes. So after 1933, Getchell left Midas, after he got into a lawsuit. He went over to this other Getchell. That's when they made the big mill over there.

What was the deal with the lawsuit?

JM: Well, the banks was closed. No one had any money, and they went in the hands of receivership. When I went up there, there were no paydays, but you were supposed to get 10 percent of your wages. Well, I only worked a little while there, ten days or so, and I got my money, because they could afford that. But some others had more money coming.

But then, like I say, it went into the hands of receivership. That was another story. I wasn't working on the Getchell, I was working under the Gold and Silver Circle receivership for, I think, a man by the name of C.W. Touseaux. He was representing the holdings. And he wanted to get all the gold he could out of it. He milled all the dumps, Elko Prince and a whole bunch.

So it was under Touseaux that all those dumps were milled?

JM: Yes. C.W. Touseaux. It's a French name. Getchell was robbing anything to mill, anything. They robbed the old stopes. That's the muck, the waste left in the stopes—easy come, easy go. They took it out, easy, tram it out, didn't have to do much mining. But they did sink a hundred feet over at the Missing Link. They went down there a hundred feet and took ore out. That was a rinky-dinky shaft—rickety. You worked under hard conditions there—it was gassy and hot down in there.

Then they worked at Elko Prince: they went down there around a thousand foot . . . they went down to the hundred-foot level.

And they worked over in the June Belle—that's a crosscut over into the west of the Elko Prince.

They depended upon a lot of little leases. They give anybody a little lease, a block of ground [on] which we had to give them royalty on a sliding scale. They made their money off whatever assay they give you, the control sample. You think you have forty-five-dollar ore, and it'll kind of wind down to where it only goes eighteen or twenty dollars. That's the chance you took. And if you found any high grade, you wouldn't put it in the mill. You'd keep it, take it up to Summit Creek there, and pan it out yourself or take it to Reno and sell it to somebody.

When all of that was going on, that was still under the receivership? That wasn't under Getchell during that time?

JM: No.

Yes. So they were basically trying to make back some of the money during the bankruptcy.

JM: Yes, they were. But when Getchell had it, they had a lot of leases there, and Getchell was doing pretty good off the leases, because, like I say, they got a good royalty off of it, and recovery and moisture. We milled some tailings from down the canyon. They gave us 80 percent moisture. Now that's unbelievable—unbelievable, 80 percent! That's got to be wringing wet. What can you do? Can't do nothing.

So that's when you were leasing, during that receivership?

JM: I was with Noreen's Uncle Ed. And then we cleaned up some mills over there at the Eastern Star, the Pilants' old mill. We cleaned up around the mill, quicksilver and amalgams, and we put it in cans. We had twenty-seven carbide cans of ore—pretty

good, because out of a dozen of them, we got nine pounds of quicksilver. It had gold in it.

So we got a lease from John Pilant, the old man Pilant. And he said, "I'll let you know. You run it through our mill, and I'll let you know when it's time to mill it." So we took it over there, Uncle Ed and I. Byron was working over in the Esmeralda driving a truck, and he told us, "John Pilant run your ore through the mill." And Pilant didn't tell us—they twenty-seven cans.

So we went over there, and John Pilant said, "Well, it ain't very good. This is all we got out of it is a bunch of copper-looking stuff." I actually believe it come from . . . whoever he got it from come from Mountain City, Elko, see. It wasn't our gold. He switched on us. He crooked us. He did.

So then he was working on the Wilson Company. Wilson was suing John Pilant for something. So we threw in our claim with him, on this ore that he'd high graded from us. Well, anyway, in the end, we never got anything out of it. We lost that. So we lost a lost more than we . . . The only way you could do any good is steal it yourself—then go sell it in Reno. And they would crook you out of it, too, [like I told you before].

You said that you've always had an interest up there? You've always had mines up there in Midas.

JM: We located claims and let them go; and located them and figured there's going to be a boom up there. We located our claims, and we prospected and leased. But people hang onto the ground pretty much up there. If we knew what was doing now, we could have owned the Colorado Grande—it was open. A lot of claims was open [that] we could have had, but who would ever have a bunch of claims when you've got to pay a hundred dollars a claim now? Unless it is patented, you pay taxes. We've got some patented ground we bought from taxes, and

we sold that to Ken Snyder at Midas [Joint] Venture.

So that's how you eventually did make some money up here, was selling those claims.

JM: I figure we made a success. We done good up there, I think, for our family now, my wife and I. She don't think we did very good in the mine, but we did good for poor people. We located claims, and we located a claim out in the Ivanhoe (cinnabar claim), and I sold that right there on a handshake. After we located it and staked it, I shook the man's hand and sold it for \$1,400. I took the tank off it and sold it for \$400, so we did pretty good right there. We were hustlers, you know what I mean? A poor man has poor ways. You have to do it, you know.

We never got rich off of them, but there's two or three guys [who] made some money. Otto Alexander made some money up there. He high graded it. And then there was Bob Richardson and another guy—he made quite a lot of money. Then there was Kiyi. He made a lot of money, \$10,000-\$12,000, then went down to Winnemucca and blowed it away and throwed it away. A little Italian, he was. That's where he got the name "Kiyi," Joe Lowry. He threw it away [on] this and that, buy drinks for the whole house. He was just a wild Italian.

Went crazy and it's gone?

JM: It's all gone. Then go back and do some more, look around and sample this and sample that and then go up, and he'd screen some more. The fines you take and ship to the mill and then make a few dollars. And they cleaned up around the retort, mucked a little amalgam or a little precipitates.

Uncle Ed, he had a little high grade. He was with Billy Ray, and Billy Ray died, so he

liberated his part. He worked it up [with quicksilver and made a little amalgam sponge], shipped it to the smelter. Of course, he had to tell where it came from. So he made out a paper I gave him, because he said, "You make me sign the deed if you give me the ore." He said it came from Tenabo [by Cortez]. I never was in the Tenabo. So I got royalties from the assay. He got a few ounces of gold out of it. He gave me a few dollars. We're old outlaws. [laughter]

*Oh, outlaws and hustlers, huh? [laughter]
Did you like mining?*

JM: Oh, yes, I still like it. I support Ken Snyder. Nobody had faith in that thing. I had faith in it. For forty-two years we had [the] Grant Jackson claim. My father-in-law says, "Keep the claim, because there's a big body of ore in there." And we kept the claim. We did everything to code, [did] the assessment work. Finally, I put it in my wife's name, because I fell down on the assessment work, so I had to relocate it in *her* name. So we kept it for forty-two years, and my brother was in on it. We even hired a guy to go do the assessment work, [but] he would sit there and wouldn't do nothing: just sit on the job, charge out fifty dollars a day or whatever his time would be, make it count. And then I was ready to give it up, but I hated to give it up because a bunch of Salt Lake leeches (I call them) were just waiting to come in to take over everything they could get. So I held onto it.

I had a few people look at it and did a little bulldozer work and everything, but nothing ever materialized. Ken Snyder come in, and he took it off my hands. I didn't get much money out of it, but I retained 1 percent of the net smelter returns, up to \$100,000, *if* they hit anything. What good is a vein to me when you can't get down to the gold? Let the company go down to the gold, see. There's a big body of ore there. It shows the fault and the ore zone in the Bureau of

Mines: it's mapped out. But Ken says they can't drill, because the archaeologists won't let them drill, because of the old mill there.

So you're not getting paid right now?

JM: No. The only way they could go over . . . when they go through that Snyder shaft, they could drift over there, drill underground, and then get [to] it all right [that way, because] they don't disturb the surface.

Then you could get your royalties?

JM: So I said to Ken one day, "You know, I ought to sue that archaeologist for depriving me of my livelihood, of my fortune."

"Well," he said, "you're going to need a long time to fight them." You would, too.

So I just let the kids worry about it. I says to Craig Haas (he's the lawyer for the company), "Still counts if it goes to my heirs?"

He said, "It still goes to your heirs." So that's the thing. They will, some day, bring out the ore, and they'll [my heirs will] get a royalty—maybe. So I think we did pretty good.

Then we was in the uranium business, too. Oh, we got our fingers in a lot of stuff in the mining, but mostly on the surface. My brother Jim . . .

Was that time that you lived in Midas real special to you in some way?

JM: Yes, I had a home there and children, and my father-in-law was there, and we liked the family all together, and just kind of—well, it was a nice place.

Kind of a family town, then?

JM: Yes.

You had your whole group right there.

JM: Yes. Then later on when he [his father-in-law] was gone, we owned forty-two lots there, and we had an interest in it. Good memories and stuff. We always go back to Midas. That was the headquarters, and my father-in-law had a little ranch there, Spring Creek Ranch, [with] some cows. We'd work in and out [of Midas].

Yes, a lot of work there.

Note

1. Dana R. Bennett, *Forward With Enthusiasm: Midas, Nevada, 1907-1995* (Reno: Great Basin Press, 1995), p. 84.

EDNA WILKERSON TIMMONS

EDNA TIMMONS was raised in Midas along with her four brothers and her four sisters. Two of her siblings—Noreen Murdock and Byron Wilkerson—also appear in this volume as chroniclers. Edna retired to Midas, and her family members who maintained contact with Midas were her father, Louis Wilkerson, his brother Ed, and their mother.



DANA BENNETT: This is Dana Bennett, and I'm talking with Edna Timmons at [her] home in Midas, Nevada. It's July 5, 1984. [As the interview begins, Dana and Edna are looking through a photo album. Mary Wilkerson, Byron's wife, joins in part of the way through the interview.]

EDNA WILKERSON TIMMONS [T]: . . . jerk line. I didn't—no, this is done by that Buck Ninny, that cowboy artist. That was taken down here on Spring Creek. That's my sister and used to be David Phillips, right up here across from Kirby's, in that roadway there, you know, that goes on up over the hill.

Oh. What building is that there in the background?

T: That's the restaurant that burned, that big long . . .

Oh, right where that big tree is?

T: Where the big tree is, yes. There's some of Midas's burros.

Like the one that By talked about, that had to have a drink?

T: Yes. There's an early picture of Midas.

Oh, these are neat, Edna. Now this spot here, whereabouts would that be?

T: This is on the west side, going up the canyon.

Oh, kind of above Sabin's?

T: Where the road used to come in.



Edna Timmons, 1998. (Photograph courtesy of Valerie Parks.)

Oh, OK, all right. So it's more up above Gordon's and down that way.

T: Right, yes. And this was the barber shop here. That's my uncle.

Now, where was the barber shop?

T: Well, it was between This was the store.

Primeaux's Store?

T: Yes, and the bar was Primeaux's Store, as I told you last night—the building itself. And they rebuilt it, and they built it over north further than it used to be.

Oh, so they moved the actual building?

T: They moved the actual building site. They tore it down and built alongside of it, in other words.

That doesn't make sense. [laughter]

T: Well, I guess it was not that And I think probably, at the time they sold Andy the building, that maybe they didn't sell him the land. Now, that's the old bar. That's my dad in front of the old, original bar.

And that was next to Primeaux's?

T: And that was next to where Kirby's is now. Where the gas pump was. The gas pump was sitting in front of this.

Oh, and that's the same gas pump, or did they bring . . . ?

T: No, that's the same gas pump. Now see, this is a later picture of Midas.

Oh, yes, the trees are really starting to come up now. Now, this shack that's here, that's the one that's still standing, isn't it? It's all rusted.

T: That's that tin [building], yes.

What was that for?

T: Well, Old Jimmy Matthews lived there. That was his property and his home.

Somebody told me once (and maybe I've got the building mixed up) that it housed a generator. And the way it's just a big lumbering thing, I thought that was what it was.

T: Well, maybe in later years it may have or something, but that was Jimmy Matthews's.

Nineteen thirty-seven. That's neat.

T: Now, this is where Ron Hassen is now. That was Ehlers's house, and then they turned it into a boardinghouse after they left.

Same Ehlers that discovered the gold up at Elko Prince?

T: Right. That was the home he built. And this is the Sweeney kids and their mother from Squaw Valley. They were coming in from the ranch for school.

Now, Ehlers sold Elko Prince after about a year, but did he stay here?

T: Yes. He left here for his daughter to finish school, till we were in high school.

Oh, really? It must have killed him to see how much money they took out of there.

T: Well, he must have got something out of it, because he always lived well, and he left his widow . . . you know, she never had to work or anything after he died. I don't think they had a *lot*, but enough that she And there was just the one daughter.

I don't know who that is, but that was one of the winters here.

Do you remember a woman named Lela Hempton? She was a schoolteacher up here.

T: Hempton?

Hempton. Because she has some pictures really similar to these. She now lives over in Sacramento.

T: No, I don't. There was the powerhouse. They evidently started to reconstruct it after the fire.

Oh, there was a fire.

T: Oh, yes.

In 1941.

T: See, this was in May of 1941. Of course, I wasn't here at the time, and I don't remember, but I know they hauled all the dumps (got the ore out of the dumps), and hauled out of here for I don't know how long. And that they closed everything down after the war [started], you know, because gold was not a priority. It's a little snowy picture, too.

Well, when I was doing research for that paper, I was going through the Minerals Yearbook where they report how the mines did each year. They said the mines closed in 1942, but every year after that, some mine out of Midas reported producing, which I thought was really interesting.

T: Yes, well, Miners Gold, Gordon and Sabin took that . . . I don't know what year. And then the Esmeralda over here.

Is that still being worked?

T: Well, the last ones that worked it was Andy.

Oh, he worked that. I didn't realize that. Now, is this the dance hall?

T: Yes.

It's got a false front on it, doesn't it?

T: Oh, yes. All your old buildings always had false fronts on them. Somewhere along the line, that fell off.

They took it off?

T: Well, it probably *fell* off, and then they just put that filling in there.

Up in those windows that are up there, some author that came through here said that there were stained-glass windows in those little squares.

T: Now, not to my knowledge. There's many hundred times that I would have remembered if there were stained-glass windows, but I don't think there was ever stained-glass windows.

That's what I kind of wondered about that.

T: Yes. There's that Jimmy Matthews, lived in his tin shack up there. It was a tarpaper shack then. It wasn't a tin shed.

Oh, OK.

T: And he and these three old guys, every Christmas, fed every child in Midas at that Midas Café, and that's the one by the big tree. And there was a stocking full of candy, or candy and oranges in a Christmas stocking, for every child.

How fun!

T: And Lorie (that's Ferguson), there's her oldest sister.

Minerva?

T: Minerva. There's my oldest sister, Laura. And some of these kids I can't remember. There's that Leroy Noble. And there's the Ehlers girl. And there's Irene Macy, Lorie's next older sister. And there's Lorie. There's Noreen, my sister; and there's myself; and this is my cousin. And By and Al are right over back in here . . . They're hiding. And this was the Lewis boys, and there was Jane Lewis. There's Desda Warren, I think, here.

Is that Gordon's sister?

T: Yes, sister. I think Parkinson was their name. And Gordon's in here, and I don't know whether that's Gordon, but he was right in there someplace.

Oh, that's a neat picture. About what year was this?

T: Well, let's see, it must have been 1920, 1921. Now this is coming in over the grade, and you come in there. Now see, there you can see where the bar was, and this was the . . .

Store?

T: I think *this* was the store. And I don't know whether that's a building in the back, or this was the bar next to the store.

Is this the schoolhouse?

T: Little schoolhouse.

Oh, there is a picture of it then!

T: Yes. And there's where this cousin lived, up here on this *other* hill over here. And this was the hotel, and the dance hall's up above here. This is where Zanoli's were, and then they put the post office up in here. But these were all . . . It was a garage in here someplace. But this was when they still had a lot of tents here.

Yes, there are a lot of tents in the picture. And no trees.

T: And no trees.

That's just incredible. Those trees grew so fast.

T: And that was in 1910. See, four years after.

Hm. Now, this is the store here, because you can see "Arthur Primeaux, General Mercantile."

T: Yes, that was the store. That's what I thought, that one.

Yes, because I have a picture (I think I got it from Lela) of the store there with the canopy over it. It must be part of a parade going by . . . all decorated.

T: Yes, it could be. I've got a lot of those. Now, there's the office of the store. See, my dad and uncle and Primeaux had this originally. I think I told you that before, too. Now, this was 1906. That's when Midas was struck.

Now, one of the pictures that gets published a lot when they do Midas stuff shows a bunch of tents, but it looks like it's way up the canyon.

T: Way up on Summit Creek.

OK, now where's that?

T: Summit Creek is right up this way. This first canyon over here. And it slopes down this way, and then it slopes down this way. Well, it was on that slope there, above where you live, back that way, up against there.

So Summit was way down that way? It wasn't up here?

T: Summit was up there where the creek comes out of the canyon there.

OK. I'll have to poke around and see if I can figure that out. Did they ever build any wooden buildings there? Or were they all tents?

T: No, they were all tents. Even the post office, as I understand it, was a tent. It was the first post office, but it was not there that long. And then they moved it down here to Gold Circle. And after it was moved here is when they changed the name.

Now, did your father come right in the very beginning?

T: Right in the very beginning. They put up the store . . . Well, they come over from Tuscarora, but they hauled supplies from Tuscarora, and then they got a lot of their freight from Paradise. Their flour was all hauled in from Paradise, over through Dry Creek or else Kelly Creek here. And apples and a lot of farm produce and things. And then, of course, from Elko and Tuscarora.

Coming from Elko, is that the same road that you take now to come from Elko?

T: Yes. There may be a few changes in it that I wouldn't remember, but basically from Tuscarora, yes. You'd come in from Rock Creek.

Right down there. I see. Now, how long did you stay here?

T: Well, I was here, let's see, must have been . . . See, I went to the first grade here and the second and third grade. And then we moved to Reno, and we were in Reno for quite a while, and I went to fifth and the sixth. And then we came back, and I was here for my seventh and eighth.

At this new schoolhouse?

T: I graduated from that schoolhouse. Dorothy Phillips and I were the first and the only two that was in our class. [laughter] There was just the two of us. Now these are

the trees down at Grandma's here. And you can kind of see part of her house here, and right in here was that beautiful big well with all the hops around it.

And where was it? It was down this way?

T: Yes, where those first trees are was my grandmother's place.

Oh, right where Buckingham has his corrals now?

T: Yes.

That'd be a pretty place to have a house.

T: Back over under those two big trees. Wouldn't that be neat? All right, there was the big office and the commissary, and Getchell's house was right over here. And this was Smith's. Here was the commissary for the company. That's where they kept all their supplies. Wasn't it last night we were talking about Crumleys?

Yes.

T: OK, this was where Francis Crumley, or Smith, that's where they lived. Then my aunt and uncle lived here. Then there was a place here. And here's that Ehlers's. And here's the big school and teacherage. And there was Cody's. There's our barn, and we lived right over this hill, across from the schoolhouse now. And there was my aunt and uncle's place.

Now, when you say, "teacherage," the teacher was living up there?

T: Yes, there was a place there for the teacher. And that was in the 1930s—early 1930s, probably, someplace. I don't know for sure, so I just put a question mark.

Now, were you born here?

T: No, I was born in Tuscarora.

Before they came here?

T: Well, no, they'd already been here. The oldest sister was born here and two brothers. And then they went back to Tuscarora. Dad's mother and brothers were there. Then we came back here, but there's eighteen months, almost two years between By and I. So we couldn't have been there too long. But then we went to Beowawe. See, they done a lot of freighting, and Dad was evidently out of the store then. And the other sister, Noreen, was born in Beowawe. Then we come back to Midas. [laughter] And the brother that was killed in the war, he was born here.

We were living (at that time, that was before we bought the house over there, Dad bought it) right on the creek, right close to where Ted's trailer There was houses back along the edge of the creek there—several houses. You can see some of the houses that go behind. This is the road coming in, and see, there was houses all around there. And then, of course, Primeaux's is where Elmore's . . . they owned that. And then Warren's was on *this* side. And Nobels and Primeaux lived there. And this was Macy's house.

Oh! OK. Now, Lorie's dad was justice of the peace here?

T: Yes. He was the big boss. And there's the little school again.

Oh, that's neat. Did they ever have to worry about the flooding?

T: The only time, they had a cloudburst. And that's the only time I can ever remember or ever heard anybody ever talk about. The water'd get high, like runoff, but *never* anything like this . . . none of them can ever remember.

You'd think with those heavy snows, that there would have been a lot of . . .

T: But like I was saying, they had so much vegetation, you know, growing on all those banks, that it kept them from eroding. Well, now the cattle have been grazing up and down this creek for all these years, and there isn't anything left. There's nothing to hold it.

Now, when was the dance hall built?

T: It was one of the first things that was built, and I don't know who it was that built it, but it was given to the town. It does not belong to the county, it does not belong to anything but Midas.

So if anybody's going to fix it up, it's got to be . . .

T: It's got to be Midas or the historical society or something like that. They tried to get some help there, but . . .

Yes, they had some problems with that. That's such a neat building.

T: Now, here's our trees when they were first planted. And that's a little boy and their house, and the house sat further toward the street.

On the same lot?

T: Well, yes, but closer to the street.

And those trees—are those trees right there?

T: No. They're all of these here.

Oh, all of these big cottonwoods around here.

T: Yes, we planted those down there.

Oh. They grow so fast!

T: Don't they, though? All right, this is in 1911. That was the inside of the store.

Now, which wall would this be? Is that the wall where the bar is now? Or is it the opposite?

T: No, I think it would have been the opposite. As I can remember, going into the store, this was china and hardware and drugs and things like that. As you come in, to the right was groceries.

Oh. But it went the whole length of the building?

T: The whole length of the building. Well, they had a pot-bellied stove back there, and then the office was off to the right.

That little room in the back?

T: Before you got to the groceries, as you walked in the door, the office was right, like here and then the big long counter, and then the shelves and things started.

Now this, to me, looks like the Jackson or the Link over here. But I can't tell, because it's the gold mill.

The gold mill. It does look like different terrain.

T: Maybe. I'm sure it's not the Elko Prince.

No, I don't think it is either.

T: And I don't think it's the Rex.

Now, where was the Rex?

T: Well, the Rex is back over in there someplace. I've almost forgot the spot. I don't think I could find it anymore.

So there's really nothing left of it?

T: No.

That's what I kind of wondered.

T: And there's so many of them, you know, like the Bamberger and . . .

Oh! Tell me the story of Bamberger. I came across, in some book, somebody told the story of this guy, who was a very nice guy, who just threw his claim open; and you could come in and take whatever you wanted. And it made it sound like he was just this crazy old coot.

T: I can't tell you anything about him, because I've never heard that story.

They said that for some reason he and his partner decided to open up the vein to whoever wanted to come in and take some gold out. They provided the bags and the picks and the shovels and the whole bit. And I thought, "No one's that nice!" [laughter] I would have been curious to find out about him.

T: Well, now I am not saying that that was not true, but I'm sure sometime in my life I would have heard that story.

Yes, I would think so.

T: I've heard of the Bamberger Mine, but I never, ever have heard of anything like that.

I'll have to ask around and see if anybody else . . . Nell Murbarger [magazine writer who specialized in Southwestern ghost towns] came through here in the early

1950s, right before it started up again, and talked to Mrs. Purdy and to a guy who was running the bar here at the time. And seems to me like there's someone (I can't remember right now), and that's where she got the story.

T: That's what I say—I wouldn't say it's not some truth in it. They probably embellished it, you know. But I sure don't remember ever hearing anything like that. You might ask By.

Yes, I'll have to talk to By. Well, this is the very beginning, too, isn't it?

T: Yes, right. All right, here is the Gold Circle. There's the store. But I can't read this.

The last word is really hard to read, isn't it?

T: I think it's a mining company, corporation, or something there.

So many of them had the first name "Gold Circle," though.

T: Yes. But there's my uncle in front of the store. Doesn't that look like a barber pole?

It sure does.

T: That was taken here. That's that Charlie Thompson and Jim Caster.

Do you remember any of the newspapers?

T: Well, I've got copies of three or four of them.

Do you really? Oh, wow! Those I'd love to see, because the historical society has one copy of The News, one copy of The Miner, and one copy of The Porcupine. And Dad

and I went in and got copies of all those, but . . .

T: Well, that's what I've got. But I think I've got one more than that.

Oh, I'd love to see that.

T: And this was the bar further up the street—like the big restaurant was here, and then this bar was up the street a little ways. And my uncle had that.

Such a nice-looking building! So big!

T: Yes, that was a nice bar.

Oh, that is really a neat picture, with all those guys sitting out there.

T: See, there's the store again, and there was a bar. That was the Fast Break—Midas Fast Break.

Do you remember the Gold Circle Club? They must not have lasted very long. In one of the newspapers it advertises vaudeville performances nightly.

T: Yes. Well, the first red light district was where the school is. And then as the town kind of grew, they made a move further on, so that's when they moved up the canyon.

That place that burned?

T: Yes.

Was that the last building, or was that the first part of that?

T: No, that was the last building. Well, there may have been another one up there. I don't remember for sure. But the one that Ida and Bob have was Irene True's. Then there was another one below that, that

burned. And then the one Elgeses had was another house, and part of it burned at one time.

So Elgeses, the [house] they're at now, was part of the red light district?

T: Yes.

Oh, that's great! [laughter] How many women did they have in there?

T: Oh, they say they had quite a few. There was—let's see, I'll name madams. It was Silvertip, and Irene True and Lois Landis, and what was the other gal's name? Well, there were the four madams here, anyway, when I was growing up. And they each had two to three girls, so it was quite a few.

How long was that a red light district? Did they close when the mines closed? Did they stay that long?

T: Well, they were open until . . . See, Irene True took the mail. She married, and her name was not Irene True when she was up here. She married Curtis True. I shouldn't have said "Irene True," because it was not True then, and I can't think of what her [maiden name was], because I knew her as True for so many years. But while she was here, then she married Curtis True. Then they moved to Winnemucca, and they had the mail route for years and the freight. But she used to drive that stage a good part of the time—sometimes both of them in the wintertime—but she'd haul those old freight sacks out there. She was a *big* woman. She must have been six-two or three, and she must have weighed two hundred pounds. But she wasn't fat, she was just big, and she was strong.

But we used to sell goat's milk. We had goats here. And we'd sell goat's milk, deliver

it up there in our wagon, you know, because there wasn't that many cows.

Now, this is where Edna and . . . Schuyler—across from Sabin's—Smokey!

Oh, Smokey, yes!

T: Yes. OK, that's where she was born. And this is the corner of Elmore's there, now Greenley's house. And the road, you can see, goes around here.

That's my baby sister.

That's a neat picture. How long did your dad stay here?

T: Oh, Dad was here till the early 1950s. Let's see . . . I was just trying to think. Elmer Nooness, I think, took the bar. Maybe it was Gordon Warren at that time. I can't remember who took the bar over [after] my dad, because he still has his house out here, and he'd come back and forth. Then the house burned, so then he wasn't out here much after that. Then, of course, he got sick.

Now, when was it that Bing Crosby was coming in here?

T: Oh, that was in the 1940s. Yes, that was in the late 1930s and early 1940s.

I didn't realize it was that early. I had it in my head that it was the 1950s.

T: No, I don't think so, because our kids were born in 1935 and 1938, and they were just little kids. He used to come over and see Dad, and they've heard him singing, you know, and all. So it had to be in the late 1930s and early 1940s when he had that ranch in Tuscarora, and his boys were all little then, too. I mean, not biggies, but young kids, you know.

Now, is this your dad and mom here? I don't remember you saying.

T: No, that's Martin Brown.

Oh, those are the Browns! Were you up at that haunted house that Tommy did a couple of years ago, "Mrs. Brown"?

T: Oh yes. That's with the one in the casket? Last year?

Was that last year?

T: Yes. Yes, that was my niece, was "Mrs. Brown," Dawn Murdock.

Huh. Well, I missed last year's. It must have been the year before that they started.

T: Last year, that was better. I should have some of those pictures, but I don't know just which one I've got. I think I've got them all in the album.

That looks like it's right over by their place.

T: It is.

Oh, yes, these are some newer. Now, was this always just a dance hall? Or what else?

T: It's the community hall. It had a stage. We graduated from this, Dorothy and I. Back here was the stage, and they had dressing rooms and the curtain. We used to put on school plays and the Christmas program. It was a community-type thing, you know.

Did any traveling groups ever come through and put on shows, or was it just . . . ?

T: If they did, I don't recall any. We used to have ministers come through and would spend the day—different denominations, and just everybody'd go to church or Sunday school.

But that was the only time there was a church or Sunday school, was when somebody came through?

T: Right. But I don't ever remember any acts ever coming in. Maybe there was, but I don't recall anything—not that I remember or I ever saw.

Now, when you'd have a dance here, did somebody play the guitar and the fiddle?

T: Well, yes, there was always somebody. My mother played the piano, and she used to play quite a bit. There was always somebody who played . . . not so much the piano as there was organ a lot of times. But you know, there was always miners that played a guitar, a ukelele, or violin. My uncle played the violin, but there was another guy here, Old Jim Raymond. He was almost a concert violinist. Even I, as a little, little kid, can remember how beautiful he played that violin, because it wasn't "fiddlin'." It was playing. [laughter]

Are those the rocks up behind Unger's place?

T: Well, they're before you get to Unger's, I think. You know, right in the general area?

Well, this cave that's up there, did anyone ever try to mine out of there?

T: Oh, probably.

Somebody poked their head into everything.

T: Yes, they'd take samples and things like that. But I don't remember anybody on the *other* side of the hill, on the west side of the canyon there. There's places up there where they dug clear up the canyon. And there's a few places on the east side, other than the one right below Elgeses. That was a working mine at one time, and I don't even remember what they called it.

That one across the street from us, too?

T: That's the one I'm talking about.

It looks like it wasn't abandoned that long ago.

T: Well, I think they have come back and picked at it a little bit. I don't think they really ever worked it. But when that red light house burned, the one Elgeses have, part of that burned, and then it was rebuilt. Different ones lived in there, and I don't think it was ever a red light district or house anymore.

But this one [is] old Theodore Caswick. I have his picture there. *Great* big, raw-boned guy. And it [the fire] happened real early in the morning, and he hid up in that tunnel, because he didn't want to get caught. I can remember that happening and hearing them laughing and everything about finally seeing old Theodore up there, and they had to wait until nighttime, because he didn't want anybody to see him. And somebody realized that he was in there and took clothes to him and things.

Oh, how funny! [laughter]

T: But every time I see that, I can just . . . because I remember him. He was tall and raw boned, great big moustache. I could just see that old guy climbing in that tunnel. [laughter] But I can't remember whether that was Lois Landis [who] had

that then. And I'm sure she had that other one. Then, when Irene gave up that other one, Lois took that one, because it was the newest one.

Took what?

T: The one that Ungers are in now. Of course, they've redone that, too. It doesn't look anything like the old one used to look, because that had several steps up and had a big back porch around, kind of a deck around and screened-in porch on part of that building.

But through the years, it was nobody there. After the mines closed down here, there was only three and four people here. I'm sure a lot of those places had to have a lot of renovation, and [that] changed the look of a lot of them. Well, "a lot" . . . there wasn't too many left.

How did the town treat the women that were in the red light district? Were they pretty much kept apart from everybody?

T: Well, yes. They came down
[discussion of current family photos]

The women that came up here to the red light district, did they stay for a time, or did they come and go pretty frequently?

T: The girls, they would come and go, but the madams were here. Marion Silvertip was here for, oh, *years*. She used to give me silk stockings every Christmas—she and Lois Landis. We had that restaurant that burned, and they'd come down on mail day and get their mail, and they could do their shopping or get their groceries, and then they went back. They never hung around. But lots of times, like in the wintertime, the stage would not get in. It would be late because of the road, or they'd have to transfer from the truck to a sleigh or snowshoes or something. And they would

eat at the restaurant in the evenings—but always at a table by themselves. You never, ever saw them recognize a man or speak to anybody. Then, usually, on Christmas Eve they would have dinner, and always they would leave the silk hose. And that was quite the thing then.

Oh, yes! Silk hose! That's neat. That's a Christmas card?

T: Well, it's just greetings.

Kind of like a postcard? That is so neat.

T: Yes, just a postcard from Gold Circle. I'll tell you who you should talk to. If you get a chance, go over to Tuscarora and talk to Nona Trembath, because she's These were taken out here. Well, you knew Al, didn't you?

Yes. She wrote an article for The Elko Daily Press two or three years ago that had quite a bit of stuff on Midas in there. She dated the schoolhouse being built at about 1914. That's too early.

T: Yes. 1914? Now, they may have built the *other* big school up there in 1914, but this school was built in 1929.

So they built the little school first, and then the big school later?

T: Well, I don't really know, because I went to the little school and to the big school, so they were both there. And I don't really know when . . . but I'm sure that they were built within . . . a few years after, because there was a lot of people here, and surely that was one of the first things they did, was build schools.

Yes. It's interesting they never built a church. That used to be the big thing.

T: Right. Or, you know, never a courthouse or anything like that.

But did they have any of the city officers, like a mayor?

T: Not to my knowledge, they never did, no.

Let's see, pictures over the summit and Pole Creek up there . . . There's Clayton and his big fish that he was supposed to have caught at Willow Creek.

Sure! [ironic comment] That card, like the one that you've got there, I've noticed on the backs of some of these pictures they've been made into postcards. Who would do that?

T: I don't have any idea. But almost all of them, instead of having to send a postcard with the stamped postcard and an envelope, they'd put the pictures on them. And many of your early postcards, that's what they were. Well, you still can get them with different scenery around, but they used to be photographs.

Yes, I've noticed that on quite a few of these. What do you remember the most about growing up here?

T: Well, the only thing I can remember is working.

[laughter] Oh, really? You said once you cooked for Getchell, didn't you?

T: Yes.

Was that when Dempsey was here?

T: Well, several different times, but I cooked when Dempsey was here and his trainer; and Governor Rolph from California; and the warden of the prison in Nevada.

What were they doing in Midas?

T: Well, they'd come up, say, bird hunting, and were friends of Noble Getchell's. They'd come up for the week. Usually, they were great sage-hen [hunters].

That's our son in the CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps] camp in Paradise [Valley]. He was their mascot.

Oh, really? That's neat. Their mascot! Now, did you meet Tim here in Midas?

T: I met him on the road from Winnemucca to Midas. I was broke down. I had a Model "T" Ford, and my oldest sister and I had been cooking at the Langsyne Mine out of Winnemucca. (These are mostly the ranch pictures.) Well, the carburetor was plugged up, is what happened, and we were having all kinds of problems. We got the old road coming from the railroad track, you know, come up over the hill, and we went through sand hills. So we were having . . .

There's my mother and Mrs. Martin Brown in front of the Brown place. And there's my cousin's wife and myself and Mrs. Brown. She was quite the lady.

Yes, she was.

T: But anyway, Tim was going into Golconda with . . . He had three or four (I don't remember how many) Basque sheepherders that he was taking back to catch the train in Golconda, and they were going to someplace. He stopped, you know, but he said he was going to take them in and put them on the train, and then he was coming back through that way. And he had to catch that train, so he couldn't help us then, but he'd be back through. Well, in the meantime, we talked, you know, and I said I was looking for work in cooking, and it was my sixteenth birthday. So we told him we were the Wilkerson girls. So, of course, the county crew was out, and we'd go a little ways, and the carburetor comes to a stop.

And you go a little further. So *they* [the county crew] stopped, and there was a little stick of sagebrush that was messing up the carburetor. I was pretty handy at fixing that, but I'd never messed with the carburetor, and I was afraid to mess with that. If I'd have had to, I would have done it, but we weren't that desperate at that time. So anyway, we'd come on to Spring Creek, and it was getting kind of late, so we stayed at Spring Creek all night.

Two or three days later this car pulls up to the house, and Dad went out. They never come to our house and honk the horn. That was a no-no. Of course, Tim didn't know that. Dad went out, and he [Tim] wanted to know if the Wilkerson girls lived there. So Dad said yes, which one did he want? He said, well, he'd talked to them down on the road and understood that the one girl was looking for work. Of course, that really set him up. He wanted to talk to the oldest one. And Dad said, "That's Laura."

And he [Tim] said, "Well, I don't know what their names are, but she wears glasses." Five years difference in our ages, and he calls me the oldest! [laughter] So anyway, then he said that the sheep boss was over here at Primeaux Store, and that he thought he had a job for me, and he would take me over to meet the sheep boss.

Well, we come down the schoolhouse road, and he turned down this way. And I said, "That isn't the way to the store!" He says, "I didn't know what else to tell your dad!" [laughter]

Oh, that's great!

T: So that's how we got acquainted. So then we went together . . . well, not right then. But, I mean, he'd come into Midas and stop and see us or something. There wasn't any "dates" or anything. Of course, there wasn't anyplace to date.

No place to go?

T: There's Mrs. Thompson, you've heard of her. That's where Hartzlers bought that great big garage and things. Well, that's where Thompsons' house was, and they lived here for years. This is Ellen Primeaux. (Not a very good light. There, maybe you can see better.) And this is Mrs. Pangborne, and she's still alive, I think. She's in Battle Mountain. And this was our Aunt Lizzie. This is my Uncle Ed. Now, see, that was in 1941.

Now, how far from Midas was . . . ?

T: When you go down the hill to Willow Creek, then there's that sign that says "Ivanhoe." All right, that's where [I visited]. And that's, what, about twelve miles, the turnoff there.

That's not very far at all. I didn't realize it was that close.

T: Yes, it's not very far.

This is the brother that was killed in the war. This was taken in Midas. There was my grandmother that lived down here and my aunt. All of these were taken when I was little. That's Mom and Ardy. And that's Mom and Ardy and a friend of Mom's. Here's my sister.

She's a cutie.

T: I just had to work pictures in here. And this album is about fifty years old, so . . . But I can't find my Midas pictures. I found some of them. [Discussion of current family photos.] This is the old Mary S. Doten School.

Oh, yes, in Reno.

[Mary Wilkerson enters.]

T: Yes, By and I both. We both went to school there. See, there's By, and there's

me. [laughter] There's a little guy I delivered at Reese River.

MARY WILKERSON [W]: You delivered him?

When women had babies around here, was there a nurse or a midwife that came around?

T: Midwife.

W: But there was doctors here.

Yes. By mentioned Pettingill [Daniel H. Pettingill, M.D.].

T: Pettingill, yes. But there was a doctor, or doctors, when Laura was born, my oldest sister. Yes, up at Summit Creek. [Dr. Secor from Tuscarora.]

W: Oh yes.

T: And then Dr. Pettingill was here for years. There was another doctor here, but I don't Pettingill I remember, but that's the only one. But he lived right . . . I'm sure it was next door to where Gordon is. You know where that house was that your uncle bought?

Yes.

T: All right, the one that was next door to that, that Cascis fixed up different. Now that's about where he lived, because that used to be three or four steps up to that.

Did he come here to open a practice?

T: Yes.

Seems strange in such a little town to have a doctor just come out and . . .

T: Well, yes, but he done well always. In fact, this is Mrs. Macy. She wasn't a midwife, but she was a wet nurse. [laughter] Do you know what a wet nurse is?

Right, yes. I had to think about it for a minute.

T: Mom was almost one of those, too. You know, something would happen, the mother would have to leave, why, Mom and Mrs. Macy would nurse their babies.

A lot of these are some old pictures, but I've got a lot of the store. There's that CCC camp in Paradise [Valley], a big picture. (I never thought about showing that to the gal from the BLM that was here. She was gathering information on the CCC camps and things.)

I didn't realize there was one in Paradise. By talked a lot about what the boys would do for fun. What did you girls do for fun?

T: Well, I tried to drown my little sister.

[laughter] Well, that sounds like fun!

T: You know, it was always, you could go and play. When little brother was born, [the one] that was killed in the war, Mom was still in bed having the baby, so the lady that lived next door to us was kind of keeping an eye on us. But anyway, I wanted to go play with somebody—I think it was my cousin, but I'm not sure. They said, yes, I could go, but I had to take 'Neen [Noreen]. You know how *that* goes over sometimes. Most of the time I don't remember minding, but for some reason or other, that didn't set good that day, I guess. So crossing Midas Creek, it had a little bridge across there, and he was born in June, so you know the water was high enough that she almost drowned in it. But she got caught under the footbridge; that's what happened.

But anyway, she was an ornery little gal. So she was saying, [taunting] “Ha, ha, ha, you have to take me with you. You have to take me with you.” [laughter] So I got about in the middle of the bridge, and I give her a little shove. [laughter] Well, Miss Nellie, the neighbor, watched the whole performance. Well, then I got frightened, because she got hung up under the bridge, or whether maybe she hung herself. [laughter] I don’t remember. But anyway, she didn’t [drown], so I clambered down in that creek to pull her out. And, of course, Nellie saw it all. Well, she come out there, and she saw that ’Neen was all right, and she just blistered my behind good for it. So she marched me in and told Mom what I had done. Of course, that ended all the play. [laughter]

And then, going to school, I was ornery. This Edith Ehlers, you know, that I was telling you about. Well, I showed you some of her little pictures there. She was an only child. Of course, they were not wealthy, but they dressed her just like she was out of a fashion magazine—always the white little stockings and the little Mary Jane patent leather slippers, all these new dresses, fancy little dresses, while we had our flour sack underwear and black socks. And everybody dressed like that. We were no different than anybody else, but *she* was. And, of course, you know, it’s jealousy, is what it amounts to. And nobody would have anything to do with her.

[I] look back on it now and [think] how sad it was, because I loved her. And as we got older, we became the *closest* of friends. But anyway, she tried so hard to be in with the rest of the school. And, of course, if she got her little dress dirty, then her mother was after her. And I used to beat up on her, slap her every night after school. I look back, we talked about it so many, many times, and it just happened to be that everybody’d say, “Come on, Edie. Come on, Edie, slap her!” So Edie’d slap her. Isn’t that terrible? From the little school, we’d go down in the ravine

between the two canyons there. Poor little Edith. She and I used to talk about that, and she’d try so hard to belong.

And I look back, and I think, “My gosh, what cruel things kids can do.” But how stupid parents can be, you know, because if they’d have just let her be one with the rest of us But you can imagine up here, with that beautiful white underwear and socks and those pretty little white petticoats and pastel dresses and those little patent leather Mary Jane slippers—she looked like she was going to a party *all* the time. And then she had jewelry. She had little gold bracelets and rings and little necklaces and things, you know. Couldn’t stand it!

When they built the school extending over here, were both sides used as classrooms, or did the teacher live in one?

T: No, both were used as classrooms.

So there were two teachers there?

T: There was two teachers.

And that playground equipment, is that . . . ?

T: That belonged to the school. I can remember those being in See, I say I went to school there. The teacher that was here, like the eighth-grade teacher (the junior high classes you’d call it, I guess), she would take me after we’d close the restaurant at night, and I would take my lessons at her house. And that’s how I graduated, because we had the restaurant here at that time—didn’t have time to go to school. So that’s how I got my eighth-grade diploma. But Margaret Watson was the teacher.

I had a teacher named Mrs. Watson, my eighth-grade teacher.

T: Well, she married a guy from here whose name was Slim Barry. As far as I know, just a couple of three years ago, she was still alive. Her maiden name was Watson, and I just loved her. She was so kind and so good to me, because otherwise I'd have never got out of the eighth grade. But it didn't seem to make any difference what time. Sometimes it'd be ten, eleven o'clock at night before I would be through. I had to take all the examinations, so it was But I sure thought the world of her. Your mother reminds me of her.

Oh, really?

T: Yes.

Mom was a schoolteacher in a little farming community in Nebraska.

W: How long?

Two years.

T: Your mother has got that sweet, kind look, and she is sweet and kind.

When you get to be about twenty-two [laughter] I'm getting to that point that you wonder sometimes.

T: Well, it was all for you. She certainly has got a lovely family, so it must have helped.

She must have done something right.

T: She done something right. Now this is the old Joe Fayant bar. That was in Golconda. And this, I think, is the bar that Kirby's got up there now. I think I'm right on that.

Kind of hard to see the bottom [of the photograph]. How many people do you think are buried in the cemetery?

T: Well, I would have said around twenty-five.

Seems to be about the estimate we've been getting.

T: Just remembering back on the size of it and all, I don't think there was any more than that. That used to be the prettiest little cemetery.

Have you been up there to look at the headstones recently?

T: No. When were we there last?

W: Was it before we moved here?

T: No, we've been up there since.

W: Oh, it was a couple of years ago.

It's been a couple of years since I've been up there, but it dawned on me the last time

T: It seems to me like we put another one up. The last time Tim and I were up there, it was down.

Well, I noticed that one, where they have the one plot. It looks like thorns around it—a plot with a woman and a little kid. They don't have the same last name. And that just has got my curiosity piqued.

T: Now, we've got slides. Remember the first year we were here we had that Argus, that thirty-five millimeter [35 mm]? And after we straightened them all up, we took the pictures of the cemetery. And I've got them in slides. And we can have pictures made off of them.

So that would be just, what, in the last five or six years?

T: Yes.

It's been a long time since I went up there. I ought to do that before I leave. So there's just those three tombstones then, isn't there?

T: Yes, the tombstones, and then there's a couple of little wooden Well, there's a couple of marble, too. A couple for the baby.

Yes, there's the little one for the baby, and then there's one for the woman, and then the one for the man where the grave's caving in.

T: Yes.

And that's all that's left? I haven't stomped around there enough, really, to

T: Seemed to me like there was more than three.

W: Yes, it does.

Well, the first thing we decided to go look for, it happened to be Halloween Day, so that was an experience.

T: Yes, let's see if I can find that. See, by that time I was cooking at the ranches down here, and I wasn't around as much. So during those 1930s, I was not

So you had pretty well taken off by the late 1920s or early 1930s?

T: Yes, 1929, 1930, I was in Reno, and then 1931, 1932, I was back here.

Did the Depression seem to hit Midas really hard?

T: Well, not like it did a lot of places. You know, you felt it. There wasn't that much going on.

I did notice in the mining reports that Gold Circle almost every year was the top producer and sometimes tied with Jarbidge. Was there ever much interaction between Jarbidge and Midas?

T: No.

Because I've noticed in writings on Jarbidge there's not a word about Midas and vice versa. Same time period, same era.



Were holidays a community event? Christmas and . . . ?

T: Fourth of July was the big thing. On the Fourth of July [we] used to have three-day celebrations.

That sounds like a party!

T: They had horse racing, and they had like little rodeos and all kinds of kids' games, dances. But it used to be a three-day event. And then what the school and the kids put on for different holidays, I think was your big I can't remember any other big, special holiday. We always had a big Christmas play. And like I say, those guys used to feed all the kids. And then they had the community Christmas tree.

Would that be in the town hall?

T: And that would be in the town hall. Halloween was just a riot. There was this Mr. Ehlers—he used to take the shotgun after you.

Oh, really! Now, why would he do that? He didn't like the trick-or-treaters? Were there more tricks than treats?

T: More tricks than treats, I'm sure. They'd take his gate off and put it on the roof and put the toilet up on the roof. You know, crazy things—tipped toilets over.

Did the kids ever have any of their own superstitions? Like I can remember, when I was growing up, there was a house on our block that we were sure Granny Goose lived there, and we were not going to go near it. But with so many mines and things and the red light district up the street, did you have your own little myths and stories?

T: I can't remember any. There was this old man that lived here, had a great big goiter on his neck, and it was *that* big—huge. And he liked to play with little kids. Everybody stayed clear of *him*, and he lived right up here where Norm and Dottie's place is. Right in there, there was a little cabin-type thing that isn't there anymore. But he was just a dirty old man. I used to be scared to death of him.

W: Did he die from that goiter?

T: I don't know whether that's what finally killed him or not. It was growing out: it was not growing in. I say he was an old man, but maybe he just seemed old to the kids. One night, either the oldest sister . . . one of the kids, anyway, got really ill, or something happened. I can't remember just what it was, whether it was croup or whatever it was. It wasn't late, but it was getting dark. And Ellen Primeaux was kind of a nurse. I mean, she'd had quite a bit of experience, and people always called on her, you know, because that was after the doctor had left. There wasn't a doctor here, so they sent me over to ask Ellen (Mrs. Primeaux) if she would come over. So, of course, it was, "Run fast and get back. Don't go over the hill." The short cut was

over the hill. "You go around the road, because then we won't worry about you."

Because there was people and things around. So as I got up here to the corner where the old commissary used to be, where you'd turn to go to the schoolhouse, I met this old man. And he grabbed me and stopped me and told me he'd give me a dime if I'd kiss him.

Oh, gee.

T: Oh! I was so scared! And boy, I just pulled away, and I said, "I don't want no dime!"

I took off, and I know I sprinted from there to Primeaux's. So Mrs. Primeaux come back with me, so it was all right. But after everything settled down and everything, the next day I told my dad, because I probably wasn't over six or seven years old. I was just like in the first or second grade. Well, I don't know whatever transpired, but Dad, of course, said, "Well, did you kiss him? Did you get your dime?"

I said, "No! I was scared!" But anyway, that was the last time that old man ever touched one of us kids or ever stopped us or anything. So I don't know—I just can hear my dad. He probably just told him he'd blow his head off if he ever touched one of his kids.

Since your dad was constable, do you remember him having to arrest any really bad guys? Or was it mostly drunks that he put in the jail?

T: Well, probably mostly drunks, although there was a woman [who] shot another woman up here. And I guess she was going to kill her husband, too. And 'Neen knows the story of that. She was here. But it was Andregg. And I know he had to put her in jail. And then there was a guy that worked for John G. Taylor, and he caught him

molesting a little boy up here, and he served time. He took him to Elko, and he served time. I don't know whether he kept him in the jail here. I don't think so. I think he took him right straight to Elko. And those are two of the But most of the other things—I think they were fights or sobering them up or something like that. I can't remember any drastic That always struck me as something that was odd—I never can remember anybody dying here from any natural causes, like being ill and dying. And I can never remember a funeral.

That is interesting.

T: Now, I don't know whether there just never was, but I cannot remember a funeral in all the years that I was here. But like Mr. Cody, I can remember when he died. He fell down the shaft over here and was killed.

And the Cody boy had the mumps. They took him to Winnemucca, and he apparently was fine, but as I remember it, they didn't diagnose it as mumps. It was like a sore throat-type thing. And he was in there for a couple of weeks and seemed to be getting along all right and died. And the mumps went in and choked him to death, instead of usually coming out like that. But they were not buried here.

And then Tamale Dick shot that best friend of his, thinking it was somebody else, up there after a dance one night. The guy he was after had the bar a couple of doors up the street. They were both built very similar. It was just breaking day, just dawned, and he let him have it, double-barreled shotgun. And it was his best friend. And he [Tamale Dick] died in prison in Carson. But I don't think it would have bothered him if he'd have killed the right man, but that was the end of old Tamale Dick. It just killed his soul. He had no fight left.

So the cemetery up here, did they even have a road that went into it?

T: Well, they used to have a road that led into it, but it hasn't been used for fifty, sixty years, because most of those graves seemed to be around 1915 and 1914.

Yes, they do.

T: So as I say, I just can't ever remember a funeral in Midas.

What about weddings? Or did people mostly go into Winnemucca or Elko?

T: I can't remember any weddings here. I was just trying to think where Jane Lewis and Vernile Vest got married. They lived here *after* they were married. And then, Edna Johnson's mother and dad, they were here as newlyweds. But I can't ever remember a wedding, but there probably was. I'm sure Mr. Macy probably married some of them.

And it probably would have been in the town hall, then?

T: Yes, because my mother and dad were married down at Myers's.

Where's that?

T: Well, Buckinghams had them. The little ranch down there used to be Myers's. But used to be they called that the county line. And they had Judge Langworth from Humboldt County, and he came there to marry them. So they come back to Midas.

So your dad was a single man when he came here?

T: Yes, he was a single man. My grandmother and the two youngest girls . . .

the other girl and the rest of the family were grown. But Grandpa died when my mother was about five years old, so we never knew my grandfather. Mom was probably fifteen, sixteen, something like that. They were from Paradise Valley. When they opened the store here, Dad freighted from Paradise Valley, and the road went right by Grandma and Grandpa's place. But they met in Paradise, but then they really were going together here.

Oh, I see. Well, we've about exhausted the tape. In Edna Patterson's History of Elko County Place Names¹ she mentions this was originally Rosebud and then Gold Circle and then Midas. And that's the only reference I've ever heard of that.

T: Rosebud was not here. Now, there *was* a Rosebud. Don't quote me, because I'm not sure, but it seems to me like it was out of Winnemucca, right around Jungo or in that direction.

So she must have the two confused, then.

T: Because there *was* a Rosebud, but I don't think it was ever here.

The roses that are growing around the houses and stuff, though, were those planted?

T: No, those are wild roses.

They're so pretty. What about the chokecherry bushes? Are those wild, or did somebody bring those in?

T: Those are wild. Most all of this. The only thing that was ever planted . . . I don't think the willows were ever planted, but the trees were all planted.

There's also . . . I'm trying to think where I read it. It was a long time ago, apparently,

when they started putting things together up here. They came across an old abandoned shaft that apparently somebody was working up here before Gold Circle—before Ehlers made his discovery.

T: I've heard some stories about like the Mexicans coming through here and finding some gold. I don't have any idea how true it is or anything, but I have heard that. [Referring to batteries for a slide viewer.] As I say, it's just a dirty shame, because I've got some excellent, excellent pictures of the cemetery.

The original?

T: No, the ones that we took when we first came here. We'll just go through these fast.

Did the unions ever try to come in here and organize the miners?

T: At one time I can remember them talking about it, but I don't think they ever accomplished anything.

Were there any social organizations here?

T: Let's see, the only one I ever heard of . . . Knights of Pithias.

They came in here and tried to start something? Did it ever take off?

T: It never took off.

So, no Rainbow Girls?

T: No Rainbow Girls, no. And I don't think there was ever . . .

Freemasons?

T: Tuscarora had the youngest lodges in the state. Now, these are the pictures of

that tornado that went through Upper Clover [ranch].

When was that?

T: In 1975, March of 1975.

I don't think I ever heard about that.

T: Oh, boy, I tell you!

What would you estimate the population [to be] when you were here?

T: Oh, there was at one time probably around 1,500.

But they didn't stay very long, did they?

T: No, mining camps were always . . . population fluctuated all the time. But there was two restaurants here, and we had a hundred boarders.

That's quite a few.

T: You know, besides the other that you get. There's always some transients.

There's one picture that I've got that was taken off of Midas Mountain, looking about that same direction that that picture is over there. About where the town hall's sitting, there's a building, looks like a two-story, wood building, but it has a flat roof and a false front and the windows are different. Was the town hall different, or was that something that just didn't last long?

T: Well, that town hall had a different front on it then, at one time, I know.

It looked a lot bigger than the town hall, too, like it was a little longer, and then the front part was a little taller.

T: Yes. But it used to have the false front on it.

I'd probably have to show you the picture.

T: You know, if I saw the picture, maybe, because there was a hotel up in there, too, at one time.

That could be what that was. So the town hall, then, was one of the first things built, one of the first wooden structures?

T: Wooden structures, yes.

And someone just donated that to Midas?

T: And they donated it to Midas. And I can't think who it was.

Who has control of that town hall now?

T: I don't have any idea. Nobody that I know of.

I've been in there once, and I remember there was graffiti all over the walls and everything. I would just love to get back in there.

T: My sister's name's all over it!

Oh, really?!

T: Probably one of the last classes of any size. There was the Devine girls and my sister, and . . . who were some of the other kids? See, I was out of here then, but I think they were about the last big class that was here.

About what year was that?

T: Let's see, she was eleven years younger than I, so . . . it had to be in the 1940s.

Were Summit and this area about the only areas they wanted to put the town, or was there talk of putting it over by Elko Prince?

T: Well, they had a town up there. I don't know as you'd call it a town, but people lived up there. There was lots of houses up there.

Oh, really? About how many people were living up there?

T: Oh, gosh, there must have been maybe forty or fifty families.

That was a lot of people. Did they have their own store and bars?

T: No.

They came down to Midas for everything?

T: They come down to Midas for their entertainment.

Those were mainly just the miners that were working there?

T: Yes, but there was a lot of families, you know. Dad worked there too, but we lived here. It wasn't really that far. A lot of men used to walk to work.

That'd keep you healthy, walking clear to work.

T: Wintertime, they'd snowshoe. [referring to a slide] Here we go.

Right. OK, that's a woman's headstone. And that little kid's—that's right next to her. They have different last names, and yet it looks like they're in the same plot.

T: Yes.

That really has my curiosity [going].

T: Now, see, there's three or four different tombstones there. There's John K. Rice.

I'll have to get my letter sharpener and poke around.

T: That was when we first built.

Now, was that the old cemetery up there? Gordon had mentioned that there was another one somewhere. Were those about the only marble stones there?

T: Well, the only ones we could find. I took one of every

When you remember, was most everything wooden?

T: There was a lot of wooden, but there was some pretty There was some big, tall ones that I can remember. Remember how they used to [have] the angels on them and things like that?

Yes.

T: I couldn't tell you whether it was angels on them or not, but there was some big, tall ones. And you could see some of them. Always you could see the graveyard coming up the canyon.

Oh, really? They were that tall?

T: Well, it had the little, white-picket fence around it. But you could always see, you know, two or three taller tombstones. And they tell me that Midas, after the mines closed and things, that they called this a ghost town, and people come and stole a lot of that.

That's what I wondered. People get a hold of those things and use them for coffee tables or something.

T: Yes.

Which is awful!

T: Can you imagine such a thing?

Well, I guess I'll let your voice get a rest. We've talked a long time. I suspect Dad will have these [pictures] back to you in a couple of weeks.

T: That's fine.

These are just such neat pictures.

How do you think Mrs. Brown would take it if she knew that her house was being used as a haunted house every Halloween?

T: I think it would thrill her to death!

Note

1. Edna Patterson, *Who Named It?: History of Elko County Place Names* (Elko, NV: Elko Independent, 1964).

GORDON WARREN

*B*ORN AND RAISED in Midas, Nevada, Gordon Warren returned to the community upon retirement. He was the son of Charles S. and Ruth Birda Warren and the brother of Desda Wood, who appears as a chronicler in this volume. Since the time of the interview, he has passed away. Mitzi Warren, Gordon's wife, was present for part of the interview and spoke only briefly during the course of the oral history.



DANA BENNETT: This is Dana Bennett, and I'm talking with Gordon Warren at his home in Midas, Nevada. It's July 6, 1984. You were born here in Midas, weren't you?

GORDON WARREN: Yes.

What year was that?

In 1913.

Were you born in your mom and dad's place, or was there . . . ?

Well, used to be an old place right across where Vest is now, or where Smokey is. There was an old garage and a rooming house there, and it was right in there.

Your parents weren't living behind the store then?

No, they didn't have the store.

What year did your parents come to Midas?

Dad came here in 1907.

Oh, right in the very beginning then?

And stayed a short while and left and then came back again the next year.

Did he come to mine?

Yes.

Is that when he got the Miners Gold, or was that later on?

No, no, that was quite a lot later. He prospected around here. He had some ground back up over the hill here. Well, he had that ground where that machinery is, you know, where you go around the hill, where the old mill used to be. Back over there—he used to have that years ago, when they first came in.

When did they start the store?

Let's see, there was foreman John Boyle owned it, and he bought Boyle out. Oh, I don't know, it must have been 1918 or 1919.

Oh, that late. So there had been a store there the whole time, and he just . . . ?

Yes, there was a store there, and he bought it.

Oh, I see. And then your family lived behind the store there, in the back?

Yes.

Was he running the store up until that blast blew it out?

No.

When was that closed?

No, it'd been closed down for quite a number of years. It closed down when they shut the gold mines down.

In 1942?

Yes, right along in there.

And did he stay here, or did he . . . ?

No, they bought an apartment in Reno and moved down there. He wasn't here only off and on since, oh, I'd say in the middle

1930s. It was something in there. You could go in that old store [when it] was open, get those old ladies' high-heeled shoes and silk socks of all different colors, men's shirts with the collar that you buckled on. It took them years before they finally cleaned it all out.

Oh, really? Did people just come in and take the stuff?

Yes, just come in and helped themselves.

Gee, still kind of hard to believe, being so different. So you had all your schooling in here, didn't you?

Yes, I went to the seventh grade here, and then I went to Salt Lake. They had, I think, five grades up on this hill and up to the eighth grade back on this level here.

It was just the big school and the little school, or vice versa?

Yes, the other way.

The other way. I always get them confused. When did they build the new one, this over here?

Oh, that was in the late 1920s, I believe.

Did they build both of these schools at the same time, or was one built later?

I really don't know.

I've got a copy of a 1914 paper out of Midas, and there's just one question. It says, "What about the new schoolhouse?" And I'm dying to know, does anybody know, what about this new schoolhouse?

Is that one of the old ones?

Well, at first I thought that's maybe when they built this other one, but that's too early. Nineteen fourteen is too early.

Well, 1914, yes, because they didn't build this till after they put this mill in over here.

The one that the ruins are still over there?

Yes.

What do you remember the most about growing up in Midas?

[laughter] Oh, I don't know. I remember we had a bunch of roughnecks here, and we ran all over the country, hunting and fishing, prospecting, and so on.

How long did you stay here?

Oh, I stayed here until I went away to school.

What year was that?

Oh, gee, 1920s—about the time they built the new school.

In 1929. And then did you come back off and on?

Well, I did until I started working for myself, yes.

And then when did you move back here for good?

I moved back here in 1960 for good.

Oh, that's right. I forgot all about that. Now, the land that you're on now, did you just happen to get ahold of it?

No, I bought it from Web Harp. Well, you know Web.

Yes.

And I got one lot from Web Harp, and the other I got from John Sabin.

Oh, so John was already here then?

Yes. He came here and lived here around 1957 or 1958.

This house that used to sit next to you here, whose house was that?

Well, the first I remember living there, I don't know who built it, but some people named Melvin—Leslie Melvin. She was a schoolteacher here. Primeaux built that. I don't know whether they built it or not, but they had the other store?

Yes, across the street there.

They either built that house there or else bought it. They lived there quite a while.

This house right next to you?

Yes.

Oh, was that before or after this place down here? It seems like that house down here that Elmores have now is in a lot of the really early pictures.

It is. It was one of the first. Well, you see Primeaux and Wilkersons moved over here from Tuscarora and opened a store. Of course, I don't know the details, but anyway, they had a falling out some way. Wilkersons got left out in the deal, anyway.

Did Primeaux have that store . . . for how long would you say? Till 1942?

Oh, gee whiz. Well, he had it, yes, I'd say till around in there. No, he didn't either,

because he went to Reno, and he leased it out. A fellow named Vic Jacobson was there. They had Vic Jacobson and Charlie Lyons (it seemed like there was somebody else) took a lease on the company property. And when they did, Vic leased Primeaux's store and house at the same time.

Oh, I see, but Primeaux himself didn't stay here?

No, they moved to Reno.

That building that the bar is in, was that the original store building?

No, that's been built over a couple times.

Is that the original site, or was the store . . . ?

No, it's been moved a little bit.

That cement slab that's out in front, was that . . . ?

Where that gas barrel was, that was right in front of the old store.

Oh, so they just moved it over. I see. Now, what about the town hall? Do you have any idea who built that?

Yes, I was here when they built it. There used to be a two-story hotel right above it.

Oh! That explains the building in the picture.

Have you got a picture with poles holding it up on the side?

Well, no, it's a picture looking off Midas Mountain, and about where the town hall should be, there's a two-story building with a slanted roof.

That was the hotel.

Ah-ha! And then they tore that down and put up the town hall?

Well, it *fell* down. For years and years they had great big poles, seventy-five-foot poles bracing it, holding it from tipping over.

Oh, really?

When we were kids.

And then it finally just gave out.

Finally gave out from . . . I think Herb Thompson bought it finally. And then the town bought that and built the . . . What do they call it? The community hall.

About when did they build that?

It must have been in the 1920s.

That late?

Late 1920s probably. Wait a minute, no. The school was built in 1920, wasn't it?

About 1929, I think, somewhere in there.

Well, this was quite long before then. Bob Unger was in yesterday. A few years ago they took up a collection to preserve it and save it, and Andy was on it, so he had to have new signatures and all on it. I don't know, I didn't ask him how much they had in it.

I think Bev said they've got about five hundred dollars. Just need to light some fires and do some errands and get them going and working on it. That'd be nice. What are some of your memories of the community hall?

Well, I think the largest crowd that I ever saw there was what they called the Dempsey

Dance. They had a dance for Dempsey. They took over a mine up the canyon here and used his name. And he moved in here and trained here. They had this dance, and you couldn't get anywheres near it, there were so many people.

Oh, really?

Just crushed if you got inside.

Oh, gee. Dempsey was the star attraction.

Oh yes.

Do you remember him being around here, training?

Oh yes, I'd see him. He had a ring down by where the old office building is, where they're going to build that new house. Along somewhere in there.

Was it a ring out in the open, or did he have it in a building?

In the open.

I'll bet that was quite an attraction.

Oh yes, go over and watch him spar.

Did he bring in people to spar with him, or did he spar with people in town?

No, he had his own crew.

Was he a popular guy around here? Did people seem to like him?

Everybody seemed to like him. Yes, they did. I wasn't here too much. I was away at school most of the time. The mine fizzled out. [laughter]

What do you remember about the Fourth of July celebrations?

Well, in the early days, it was mostly bucking horses and horse races and tug-of-war and such as that.

A real ripsnorting time then?

Yes.

Would they just do it out here in Main Street?

Right up and down the street.

That'd be fun. About how many bars do you remember being here?

Well, there was two right here, then there was two more down where the bar is now. There was at least four, probably more.

What about hotels and restaurants?

Well, they were more scarce. [laughter]

People would rather drink than eat?

[laughter] Yes, yes. There was only that one hotel, then afterwards they had this old rooming house here.

This little red building, or the one next to it?

Well, it's all been torn down now. He had a garage on one side and the rooming house alongside of it.

This bar that's kind of across from Sabin's, is that an original, or was that . . . ?

No, that was built way later.

Do you remember any newspapers up here?

No, I don't. There used to be a drugstore.

Where was that?

Well, it'd be right across from Ron, on the other side of the street.

So kind of near your dad's store then?

Well, no it was down where Bishop has got that fenced in now, right along in there.

Right. And that's all the guy did, pharmaceutical-type stuff?

Well, I remember when we was little kids, we used to go in there and have ice cream.

Oh, you had ice cream there? Did he have a soda fountain?

Yes. Had those old iron chairs.

How neat. Do you remember a guy named Bamberger?

Oh yes.

There's a story about him—that he decided to open up his mine, and anybody who wanted to come in could. He'd furnish the picks and shovels and bags, and they could help themselves to the gold. I find that a little hard to believe. Do you know anything about that?

No. He built that rock house that burned down here two or three years ago.

Oh, he did?

And they went up in this little draw, the little Miners Gold, and sunk a little shaft and run into some beautiful high-grade ore. That was the real discovery of Midas.

Oh, really? So he was the first one that made the discovery that . . .

He's the one that made the discovery, yes.

Oh, all the history books have Paul Ehlers.

That was way later.

Oh, it was? So about what year did Bamberger do that?

Oh, I don't know, but it was quite a while before Paul. But it didn't amount to anything. It was just a pot.

Oh, I see.

Paul Ehlers had the Elko Prince, yes.

And that's really what started the rush into the area, was Paul's discovery?

Well, that was the first good, solid vein they had.

I see. But Bamberger's discovery really didn't set off a rush?

Started it.

Oh, I see. That's real interesting. About how many people were here, do you remember?

I don't remember at all, but they claim there were 2,500.

That's quite a few. But it must have dwindled pretty quick.

Oh yes. Well, you've seen, I guess, these old pictures where there's tent houses all over the hills and all up and down the canyon.

Yes.

They took quite a lot of ore out before the Elko Prince was running good, over here at the old Rex Mine. Do you know where the Rex is?

No, where is the Rex?

Well, it's around the hill from the Prince. You know the road that goes around the hill? There's a sled foundation there. That's the old Rex. And there's quite a lot of ore taken out of there.

Now, I've got some pictures of the Rex, but I don't have . . .

And they also had a mill at the mouth of the canyon.

Down here?

Right down at the mouth of the canyon, yes.

Was that a crush mill or cyanide mill?

No, it belonged to what is the Esmeralda now, where the gallows frame and so on around the hill is. It belonged to there. They mined quite a lot over there.

Oh, they did? Yes, there was some really big mines up here. Do you think there's still gold out there waiting to be pulled out?

Oh, sure, there's bound to be gold. But I don't think it'll ever be a big camp, because the veins are too small. The only big vein they had was where this last mill was. They had a good-sized vein there. And they lost it. They hit a fault and lost it, so that could be picked up and made quite a mine.

That's really about it, you think?

But the rest of them, I think, are really too small. Of course, now you take like over

to the Sleeping Beauty, on up over the hill, the leasers used to have a ball over there, and they found gold *everywhere*.

Oh, really?

So you find a place like that, they could probably lease the whole mountain, lease the whole country. I wouldn't doubt it at all.

Do you think they've probably got most of the good stuff?

Oh no. I think they just stopped.

What passed for a church around here? Did they ever talk about building a building?

Not that I know of. We used to have traveling preachers come in and out all the time.

And would that be up in the community hall?

Well, no. As a rule they'd hold the services in somebody's house. They'd go from one place to another. One Sunday it would be at one house, and the next time it'd be somewhere else.

About how often did the preachers come in?

Well, I guess whenever they could make it, probably.

So you guys didn't have to put up a Sunday school, huh?

No.

When you were here, did they have the electricity coming from the powerhouse yet?

No. No, they didn't have electricity until they worked the last big mill, and then they wired the town.

But earlier it was all kerosene lamps?

Yes.

That's interesting. Did you play on the ball club?

Well, yes, we used to have pretty good ball teams.

Did you have a name? I forgot to ask Joe Keller that.

No, we didn't have any name.

Just the Midas Ball Team?

Yes. That was right at the time Noble Getchell had the Betty O'Neal, and he had a professional ball team. That is, he hired a bunch of these young kids that got out of school. We beat the socks off them one Fourth of July.

Oh, really? That's great. Did you travel much, playing?

Oh no.

People would come here to play you?

We just played Winnemucca and Betty O'Neal and so on, just right in the vicinity.

Sounds like fun. And where was your diamond that you played on?

Right outside the Squaw Valley fence.

That's a long ways down there, isn't it?

Where that gravel pit is now, that was all level in there at that time.

Oh, so there was really no place around here level?

Not at all.

That's interesting. Did the mills—going all the time, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week—make Midas noisy? Could you hear mill activity over here?

Well, no, you never think about it.

It just was there.

Yes, like, I guess, living alongside a railroad track. You get used to it.

Now, did your dad have the water rights before Sabin?

Yes.

How did your dad get ahold of them?

Bought it from the Salt Lake Hardware Company.

Now, how did that happen to happen?

[laughter] I don't know. They put it in.

Oh, they put the system in?

Yes.

And then your dad bought it from them. How long did he hold those?

Oh, he had them quite a while. But there was always a shortage of water. Couldn't have lawns or anything in those days.

Now, the pipes and stuff that are in now, is that all the original stuff, or did someone come through and change it?

Oh no, that's all been changed.

Did Sabin do that?

Yes. Yes, changed them. Sabin went up and sold the . . . Goldwater and put in here. I believe that's what it was, and we needed it here. There's no doubt about that. But I guess nobody made a complaint—evidently not.

There weren't too many people around to complain then, were there?

No.

Where did the you used to hang out as kids? What was the hangout spot?

Oh, really, none. We used to do a lot of running around the hills and so on. We went up on the Midas Mountain one time, and got a rock rolling off and rolled it through a fellow's house.

Oh no! I'll bet that went over well!
[laughter]

He was sleeping there. Just orneriness, that's all. We used to have two icehouses here. We played quite a bit in them.

Where were those?

Well, there was one that sat back there about where . . . well, this side of where Tony is. And then there was one right down in behind Kirby's, somewhere along in where the old jail is.

What did they do? They'd cut the ice out of Willow Creek in the winter and bring it in?

No, they had a pond right at the mouth of the canyon, and all the men in the wintertime would go down there and saw chunks of ice and haul it up and fill them up.

That'd be a nice, cool place to play in the summertime.

Yes.

That would be great. Do you remember a woman known as the Sagebrush Queen?

Oh yes.

What can you tell me about her? Lorie and Joe just barely remembered her. They got my curiosity up.

Well, they took up a homestead, she did, down there where Beverly White's homestead is. She's the original owner there.

Now, was she in there by herself?

No, she wasn't. But I don't think she was married. Anyway, they left a while, and she came back. She was with a different man, a man named Perly Peck. He built a house over there, well, just this side of where Tommy's barn is. He had a nice house there. He worked around here a while, and I don't know what kind of deal it was or anything, but finally Leonard Wilkerson ended up with it. (That's Byron's and Edna's brother. He got killed in Korea.) I guess Lou [Wilkerson] probably took it over and sold it.

When they talked about the Sagebrush Queen, she sure sounded like a character.

Well, they used to haul in wood, cut sagebrush, and haul and sell wood—anything to make a dime. He was a good worker. He was a pretty good carpenter.

And did most everybody build their own house, or was there someone around here that was known for woodworking?

Well, there was a fellow named Herb Thompson, had a house . . . Oh, there's no place just where it is, but it was right across from where the dance hall is now. And she used to take in roomers too, there. And he used to do a lot of carpenter work. He had two or three houses of his own here that he rented out. And there was an old fellow that had that house up in the canyon that this outfit down here has now—Martin Brown, where that old garage and so on is. Well, he did a little carpenter work. He was kind of a Model-T mechanic and a little bit of everything.

Did about everybody have their own car, or was it mostly horses still?

No, not in those days they didn't. They weren't too prevalent.

These roads were kind of rough on them anyway.

Oh, gee whiz! You'd have a half a dozen flat tires every time you went to town . . . those rocks. The first car we had, Dad bought a 1923 Dodge. The rest of it, before then, everything was staged and freighted in.

By horses?

Mules, yes. Mule teams. And they had a stage that run then, too.

Oh, they did?

Mail stage, yes.

How often did that come in?

Twice a week.

Did most of the bars and hotels and stuff run pretty much all the way up into there, or did it stick to this downtown area?

No. They built pretty solid all the way through [town].

Did most of the men here mine, or did they do something else?

No, it was all strictly mining at that time.

Didn't have too much ranching going on around here?

No. Well, of course the ranches [have] always been there. And dances and so on, they were up here, and rodeos and so on. Hammonds were here at that time, too. They'd started their little ranch up in the valley. Squaw Valley was owned by a big British company, and at one time they had a mansion down there. Beautiful furniture, they say. I don't remember anything. And then John G. Taylor and Ellison bought them out, got ahold of it. They owned everything around here together—John G. Taylor and Ellison. And then they had a big squabble, and they split everything up.

In the 1908 paper there was an article saying that Taylor claimed to own all the land that the town was sitting on. Do you know what ever happened?

The Salt Lake Hardware Company bought the rights to the water line from John G. Taylor.

Oh! So he really did have a legitimate claim here.

Oh yes. He had every other forty [i.e., he owned alternating parcels of land, forty acres each], all the way up the canyon here.

Do you remember one or two particular houses that were the grandest houses in Midas?

No, there really wasn't any.

They all pretty much looked the same?

Yes. There was no really pretentious houses or anything here at all in those days. Probably the largest house was the Primeaux's house down there. Or maybe Mrs. Thompson's. She took in roomers, so that was pretty good-sized, too.

Now, when you were here, was the red light district just that one rock house over there, or was Unger's house part of that?

Unger's house was.

What about Elges's? Edie mentioned something about Elges's house being part . . .

No, Martin Brown built that afterwards.

Oh, he did? I thought that was kind of far down the canyon to be a part of that.

Yes.

Where did you kids used to sled or sleigh ride or toboggan?

Well, one of them was right down that hill. We'd always sled down.

Did you ever try coming down off of Midas Mountain?

Well, yes, I have.

I'll bet that was kind of a ride!

I come off there on skis one time and took quite a tumble. We used to be able to get up on this hill here in the winter, when there was crusts on the snow, and slide clear down to the mouth of the canyon.

Oh, that'd be a ride! Then you'd have to walk back, right?

Yes, then you'd have to walk back.

So you made all your own sleds and stuff, or did you have store-bought?

No, we had boughten sleds.

What about some of the other holidays? Do you remember, was there a special celebration for Christmas?

Well, yes, the kids always put on a show on Christmas, made talks and had little acts and so on. Of course, they always had a Christmas tree and a dance afterwards.

Would that be like on Christmas Eve?

Yes.

Did anybody ever come into the community hall to put on a show for Midas, or was it just local talent?

Oh, no, they used to come through, these different acts, you know.

Was it mostly music or plays?

Plays, and some of them would be dressed up as darkies and sing all kinds of songs, such as that. [Caucasian performers in blackface makeup, probably vaudeville-type acts.]

Who provided the music for the dances, or what kind of music did you have?

[laughter] Well, they didn't have much. An old fellow played the violin, an accordion, and piano. That was about it. That was the local talent. [laughter]

MITZI WARREN: . . . Texas shot up that time. A new .22, and he shot up that tent.

Oh, a new .22.

Is that when the Indians used to come in?

They come in every year, come through in the spring. Yes, I guess on the way to Owyhee, and then they'd pick these wild onions and wild potatoes and just live on the land as they went through.

Is there still a lot of that growing around here, wild vegetables?

Oh yes. It's all here, but I don't even know what to look for, a wild potato, anymore.

Yes, I don't know what to look for either. Probably the cows have done a pretty good number on them, too.

Well, I remember they used to have a white flower stick up a couple of foot or so above the ground.

Did about everybody have a garden?

No, we didn't have the water then.

Oh, so really no one had gardens?

No.

So pretty much all your food came from

It was shipped in.



The playground equipment that's over here at the school, the swings and stuff, was that all put in when they built the school?

Yes.

So that's all the original stuff?

Yes.

Was there playground equipment up at these two schools?

No, nothing at all.

Now, was the sagebrush around here this high? Or had it all been pretty well cut down? I'm hearing all kinds of versions.

No, it wasn't as high, because there was more travel on it. Had trails going everywhere. Now, like, if someone worked at the Prince, there was only a few of them lived up there. The rest of them walked up from here. They walked to the mines, so they had trails going everywhere.

So there really weren't very many people living over at the Prince?

No, no, there was just a few houses up there.

And the cemetery, what's your estimate—how many people do you think are buried there?

Gee, I wouldn't have any idea, but it used to be pretty good-sized.

Was it? We were up there this morning just to take another look around. The brush is so high it's hard to see anything.

Yes. Yes, it used to be pretty good-sized. I guess you can't see anymore. You see where the fence used to be around it.

Is that the wire that's all beaten down?

Yes. It was pretty well filled.

Did they just keep the sagebrush cut off of it, or did they try and grow grass there?

No, I guess just kept it open to get in and out is all.

Do you ever remember seeing a funeral here?

Oh yes, quite a few.

Would they take place in the community hall?

Right on the ground where they buried them.

And who would usually preside over them?

Whoever could talk the best.

When do you think they quit burying people there?

Gee, I don't know. The last one I remember was old Frank Hutchinson. He lived up the Water Canyon, had a cabin up there, and he froze to death one winter. He's the last I remember. Of course, it could have been since then.

Were most of the markers wooden?

No, no, there were a lot of stone markers.

Were there? Did they bring them in from Winnemucca?

Oh yes, wherever they get them.

And then people just stole them?

Stole them.

What would you do with one? That's what I can't figure.

I don't either.

Yes, somebody's grave marker.

Oh yes, there used to be a lot of them. Some pretty nice ones, too, pretty good-sized ones. I don't know how . . . they must have had a time loading them.

Now, was there a road that went into there?

Yes.

You can't see a trace of it now.

Yes, you drove right down through there.

Right off that road that goes to the mill?

Yes.

So it would be kind of like where that fence is?

Yes, it run right straight down the canyon.

OK, so the trace of that is gone.

No, there's nothing at all there.

Was there a fire that went through there? Is that what happened to a lot of the wooden markers and the fence?

Well, I imagine there was a range fire. So I imagine that probably burned off a couple of times.

I've heard that there was a constable here and a justice of the peace, but was there ever, like, a mayor?

No, just the justice of the peace and the constable.

And were they considered like the city council or whatever?

No, they were elected by the people.

Well, when there was a funeral, do you know what they did? Did somebody just make up a coffin, or was there an undertaker here?

No, no, I don't think there was any undertaker. I suppose they hired somebody to build it.

You're the first one I've talked to yet that remembers a funeral. Nobody else remembers any, so I've got to ask you all my questions.

Well, there was quite a lot of them there all right.

What about weddings? Did a lot of weddings take place here?

Yes, there were quite a few weddings.

Was it pretty much a town celebration when there was a wedding?

Yes, usually they'd have a shivaree and a dance.

That'd be fun. Did they take place in the community hall?

Yes, they'd go to the house and shivaree them, then they'd take them to the hall.

And the weddings themselves would take place inside the hall? Or would they be at the house?

Well, they'd usually get married before then, then have the shivaree and everything afterwards. Probably go to town and get married.

What do you remember about the shivarees?

Oh, we just found cans and made a lot of noise. [laughter]

Do you remember, was the jail usually occupied, or was that not necessarily open?

No, not too much, just on Fourth of July or when there was a little inebriation. [laughter] Somebody got out of line, why, they'd throw them in there. [laughter]

It's just such a unique-looking little jail. It looks like it wouldn't be too hard to get out of.

Well, at that time, it was pretty well built.

Was it always behind buildings like that, or was it isolated?

That's the only one that I remember.

Now, did Midas take any old excuse for a celebration like some towns did, or were there certain things that were celebrated all the time, like weddings? We talked about weddings and Fourth of July, Christmas.

No, they'd have Saturday night dances occasionally, such as that. It's usually just the ranch crew and the people here.

Did just about everybody go from Midas?

Well, yes—men, women, children. The kids would be lined up on benches, and the

mother and kids would be landed on benches alongside the hall, watching. Yes, everybody joined in.

That would be fun. I'm hoping to get in there and take a look at the inside here pretty soon.

Can't you get in?

Well, it's all nailed shut.

Well, isn't there a padlock on the front?

Yes, but the door on the front's got a big board over it, all nailed up. I think they just did that last bunch this year.

Well, the window, someone broke. Kids, I guess, broke all the windows out. The building inspector said that it had to be protected, or else he'd condemn it.

Oh, so that's why they boarded it up.

Sabin got it condemned once, and the people raised so much hell that they took it off.

Were there stained glass in those windows up there at the top?

No, it seemed to me like there was up here in the front.

You know, they had those three windows across the top with the little windows. Those are stained glass?

I think they were, in there.



Is there any scandal that stands out in your mind that happened when you were living here?

Oh, well. [laughter] All kinds of things happened.

Were there any old-time Western shootouts?

Yes. There was two bars right across here, and they had a dance one night, and one of the bartenders imported some girls in to spruce things up a little bit, and there was two or three of them got shot that night—one killed and two or three wounded.

The guys were shooting each other? Or did the women get shot?

No, just the men.

Was there a town drunk?

A lot of them! [laughter] Different times.

What about . . . a lot of times kids have their own superstitions and stories. Do you remember anything that you kids used to either avoid or a place that you wouldn't go near because of something that you thought . . . ?

No, not really.

You pretty much ran where you wanted to?

Got along pretty well, yes. They had a fellow named Tamale Dick. He's one of them that had the bars. In fact, he's one of them that did the shooting. He went to the penitentiary. He wasn't all there. He was crippled to start in with, had polio or something. His hip was out, and he didn't live very long after they put him in the pen.

Oh, yes, there's all kinds of things happened. We had a young schoolteacher came in here, and that was after they'd closed the schools. They just had this one school open. One of the owners was named Hungry Joe, and he was a pretty heavy drinker. [laughter] At that time the saloon was more like a community center, you know—everybody met there. This schoolteacher'd been there, and she started home

up the hill. She got out, and we heard her scream. She come running back, and she said, "There's a bear out there!" [We went out] there, and old Hungry Joe [was] crawling home!

Oh no! [laughter] Oh, gee. Oh, boy. Now, for the record, what were your parents' names?

Charles and Ruth Warren.

And how many brothers and sisters did you have?

Well, I have only one living. My sister was a twin, and she died at birth. And they had another son that died, too.

Were they all born up here in Midas, too, like you were?

Yes.

All of you were. Oh! What was the Sagebrush Queen's real name?

Well, her last one was Peck.

OK, her husband's name was Peck.

Perly Peck.

But do you remember her real first name?

No, I don't.

With a nickname like the Sagebrush Queen, that'd be easier to remember.

 BYRON WILKERSON

***B**YRON WILKERSON was raised with his three brothers and four sisters in Midas, Nevada, where he worked in the mines and mills. He returned to the community upon his retirement. His father was Louis Wilkerson. Two of his sisters, Edna Timmons and Noreen Murdock, also served as chroniclers for this volume.*



DANA BENNETT: I'm at the home of Mary and Byron Wilkerson in Midas, Nevada, on July 4, 1984. Later on in the tape, Joe Keller, his wife Gaynell, and Mr. [Bishop] and Mrs. [Loriene] Ferguson will join us.

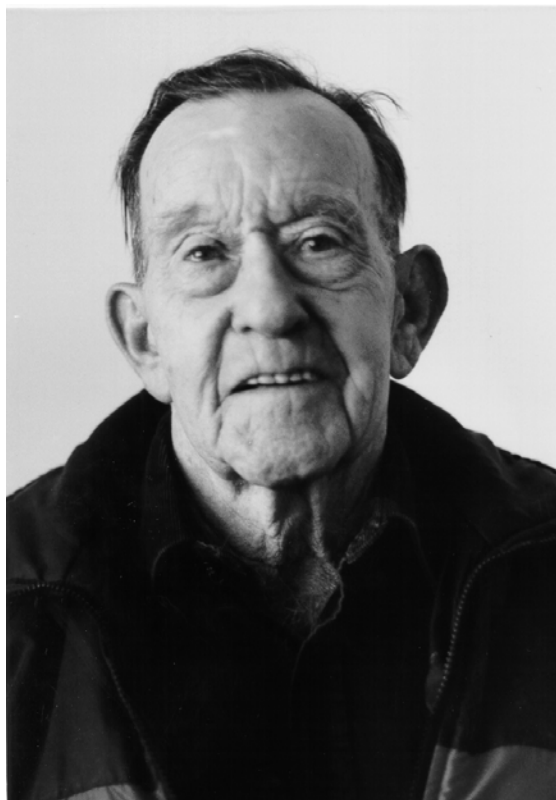
BYRON WILKERSON [BW]: I think Mrs. Lyons is dead, but her daughter's still alive. She was the postmistress here for a long time, but her daughter went to school here and then went somewhere else. She married a fellow that carried the mail in here for a long time, and Agnes was quite interested in what was going on here.

Then there was another person You've heard of Newt Crumley. Well, his

wife was here for a long time. Her daddy was an assayer for Getchell. And Frances, I think, gathered up a lot of stuff. We was gone. We went to Reno and had a ranch down there for eight years, or nine, while we was going through school. Then I just came back for a little while and got teed off and took off. And that was in the winter of 1937 and 1938, I left. And there was a good many things that went on here afterwards.

So what years were you here?

BW: Well, I was born here, and we didn't leave then till 1920-some. We went to Reno and got the ranches. We had a chicken ranch and a dairy and cattle ranch down there. We was there for eight or nine years, because we all went through school down there after we got out of this grammar school. Then we moved our cattle back up to Midas and got that place down by Spring Creek where Whites are. It was during the time that we was developing that ranch, too. It must have been in 1930, because we were developing the ranch when I took off, because I just give everything I had to my



Byron Wilkerson, 1998.

youngest brother and left. I thought it'd be a good time to start over again, because I didn't have anything anyway! [laughter]

My mother was in Vegas, and I intended to get into the Merchant Marines. Instead of that, I went to work for Boulder Dam. Never left there, then, for a long time. And all those years It was ten years before I ever come back, when one of the family died, to the funeral in Winnemucca and just stayed a day or two and went back. Then I never come back again for another ten years.

When did your dad come here, then?

BW: Dad was here, and him and [Art] Primeaux opened the first store here—the Wilkerson-Primeaux store. Someplace, somebody had a picture of that.

I think I do.

BW: Then he was here for years after that. Dad never wanted to leave Midas. This was where he wanted to stay, and he did stay an awful long time. This place right up here we had. His brother bought that.

The green house, you mean? Where Tieberts live?

BW: Right. And we spent quite a few years right there in that place. We had a place over by the big schoolhouse, right across from it. Now it's nothing but high sagebrush. And that's where we had our barns and corrals. When they built that school, that kind of fouled all that up. The cows was breaking in the schoolhouse fence, and the kids were running the cows off. (Oh, it was just like we are with Ken right now. They try to live in people's houses.) But I don't even remember the first teacher that taught there in the schoolhouse.

At the big one?

BW: Yes. I've been trying to think ever since we were talking last night about Mrs. Peacock. Mrs. Peacock was her name, and she taught here for several years. She was a very, very nice woman and a smart one. She taught college before she come here, and she wanted to get away from it all, through family trouble of some kind. She got this job, and she got away all right! I never did see any of her family that ever came in here. She had two sons, and all the time she was here, I never heard her say anything but just mention them, and that's all.

The other two schoolhouses, were they separated by that . . . ?

BW: Yes, they were separated. Right above the old dance hall on that hill was one.

Right. Was that the first one?

BW: That was the little school, they called it. Yes, the first school. And the big school was right straight up from Kirby's on the hill up there. Both of them were up on the hill.

Why up there?

BW: It was good to have them up there. The snow never got real deep up there, because the wind blew a lot and removed it. Now, if they'd have had it down in a low spot, why, the teachers would have had a rough time. But there used to be several homes up on top of those hills there. When I come back after all those years, they was all gone. I don't know whether people used them for firewood. There's no sign of them.

So was there, what, one teacher to each building?

BW: One teacher, yes. There were two teachers here: one for that little school and one for the big one. But after they consolidated and got that one over there, the teacher had all the grades.

There were some people here by the name of Anderson. Both of those girls, I think, was in the eighth or ninth grade. They was ready to ship out and go to college or something. And some boys who I never can remember.

When I left here, there was a big family of people by the name of Alred. My youngest brother and him packed up all their gear one night and took off for parts unknown. They just saddled a horse apiece and a packhorse. We found the boy down at Battle Mountain getting ready to ship out with a bunch of cows going to Australia and got him just in time. [laughter] Dad was so concerned about . . . A kid old enough to run away was old enough to do what he wanted to. He was going to sell his horses and got a job with one of our ex-governors that was shipping



Mary Wilkerson, 1998. (Photograph courtesy of Valerie Parks.)

cattle, and he was going to go that far on a freight train to the coast and then go to Australia.

MARY WILKERSON [MW]: Was he old enough?

BW: Well, he was fourteen. Seemed like in them days, boys at fourteen were a lot more independent than they are now. They weren't confined to their homes like they are now. He'd been working on the ranch down there and running cows around here. And like I told you, he delivered milk around town and had a little business going. He was more mature. But he was working ten, twelve hours a day (and these kids don't do that anymore), driving the car back and forth from the ranch down there in Midas.

I drove in Reno when I was fourteen, when we had the chicken ranch, delivering

eggs to stores. And it was only one time a policeman asked me if I was old enough to drive. It surprised me, because I said, "Well, I've been driving for a year or more around here." I'd knocked down a couple of gates and one thing and another, but I'd get down there and back and get the job done and never did have no trouble with other cars. So he went and seen Dad. I guess they got it straightened out, because I was never stopped.

So to back up a little bit, your dad came in 1908 with Primeaux?

BW: I don't know what year it was, Dana, because they came from Tuscarora. I know that we was here during the war, and I can just remember the problems of war, when World War I started. People was very [easily] disturbed. They was shooting each other, and some old man by the name of Ehlers here had a restaurant up the street, and he was really German, and he had a picture of the Kaiser hanging in the dining room. A man by the name of Savage came in here, that owned the Elko Prince Mine, and he went in there to eat, and he asked him to take it down. Oh no, he wasn't going to take that down. So he just pulled out his pistol and shot it full of holes! [laughter] Everybody was [in] on the fight. People don't do that anymore, but you didn't mention the Kaiser to any of the German people over here, because they was real upset. And then, when they signed the armistice, what a *wild* celebration went on here! [laughter] There was about two hundred to three hundred people here, and they was dancing in the streets and shooting up in the air, and the buckaroos was running their horses up and down the street. They just had a *real* good time, all day long.

MW: Is that November 11, 1918?

BW: Yes.

And then what year were you born?

BW: Thirteen [1913]. I can just barely remember that war going on, because Dad and his two brothers left here to go. Dad had some cattle, and he was mining here, and he also had horses that [he] contracted in that construction for mill sites and one thing and another. And there wasn't any of them that could get in [the service] out of Midas that I can remember, that ever got in the war. An old man running around here now by the name of Ray Clawson, that was here for years, and he was with them. And they all come back: none of them got in the war. Just seemed like real young men got in, and men without families, but they didn't do that in World War II.

Or Vietnam.

BW: If you was warm, you went in the service.

MW: And we had three children at that time.

What were the big mines then?

BW: The Elko Prince was working quite a few men, and they did for quite a few years. The Link over here was another one—they called it the Link.

Now, where was that?

BW: That's around the grade, you know, going around this way, where the old mill . . .

Around that school out there? Oh, to the old mill back there.

BW: Yes, you go to the old mill, and it was right at the old mill. There was another mine that was working quite a few people [that] they called the Jackson. I don't know

how many they had, but there was quite a few men who worked in both places. But we was just kids, and I'd work at the Elko Prince for a while and get tired of it and go down and work at the Link. It was owned by different people. And then I worked in the mill and worked in the powerhouse around here. It was quite a circulation. A lot of the men did that. There was one place in the Link that had hot water coming out of one tunnel and cold water coming out of another one, so if you'd get in that hot tunnel for just a little while, you couldn't stand it for too long. So you'd stand in between and cool off, and then go and work a little while, and we'd take turns going back and forth in those two tunnels. It's a wonder we all didn't have pneumonia.

Yes! That mill where the foundations are, which mill is that?

BW: That was the Getchell Mill.

That was the seventy-five-ton?

BW: Hundred-ton mill, and they had a powerhouse with two big diesel engines in it [that] generated the power for the mill and the whole town, if you wanted power. There was some of them [residents who] didn't have it, because they just didn't want it. They had power over town to the Getchell house and that mill there and the bookkeeper's house, and I don't know just how many more. We never did have it. [For those] old-timers then, that kerosene lamp was all right. Boy, I'd hate to read by it anymore! Golly! Maybe our eyes has gone haywire, but we used to do all our homework and everything by one of those kerosene lamps. You couldn't open the windows in the evening, with every breeze blowing, because it'd blow it out, so you'd just have to suffer it out. And it was a very suspicious [superstitious] thing to everybody: if you was around one of those lamps and the

chimney busted for no apparent reason, it was real bad luck. And it used to scare me half to death [if] one of them would break! [laughter]

MW: Like a bird getting in the window.

BW: Yes.

So was the population pretty constant, or was there a lot of coming and going?

BW: No, it was fluctuating. Still, miners are the same way. Miners don't stay on the job too long. And there was another very popular suspicion [superstition], too: if a woman went in a mine, they'd leave. They just wouldn't tolerate it. If a woman ever went in a mine, most of those old boys would just pack up their lunch buckets and shove off. They said that was the worst kind of bad luck, to have a woman in a mine.

Was there a newspaper here that you can remember?

BW: Not that I ever recall. No.

The latest one I've got is 1914.

BW: A newspaper?

Handwritten paper.

BW: Right here in Midas? Who was the editor, do you know?

Benneson had the drugstore—F.J. Benneson.

BW: I never remember him, either. There was an old doctor here that, of course, everybody knew and stayed here for a good many years—a fellow by the name of Pettingill. But he was the only one in the medical field that I knew. And Mrs. Warren, Gordon's mother, was an R.N., and she was

very good. A lot of us kids would go to her. She'd see to it, if we had bad cuts or bad colds and things. She knew her medicine real well. And she was sure a nice lady. Never thought of charging anybody for anything. I've been back in there and had her bandage me up and give me stuff for aches and pains—never charged me nothing.

There was a fellow here by the name of Hargrove, had a good fighting dog, and we thought we had one, too. We'd get them together and fight—my dad and Mr. Boyle. This Hargrove kid was a relative, and this dog always followed him. My brother [Albert] and I [were always] sickening our dog onto his dog. They got so they didn't like us too well, either. He jumped for my brother, [who] threw his arm up, and he [the dog] bit clear through his arm. We took him up to that old doctor, and he dipped those orange sticks into iodine—they didn't have Mercurochrome or Merthiolate—and he just run that right through and pulled on it. [laughter] Boy, I remember that brother of mine was *white*. We fought all the time, you know, and had just had one, I guess. I thought it was kind of fun to have that doc do that and make him holler, because, boy, he hollered.

So in a few days, he sicked his dog onto Don, and our dog got him by the leg. Don had his overalls on, so the dog didn't get [bite] clear through on him. But then our parents got together and forbid us to ever sic those dogs on each other again, because they'd fight and get tore up pretty bad.

But Mr. Hargrove sent his boy and I down here to get a bucket of water one time. Right by the bridge, there was a big well there. We went down to the well to get him some water, but we got in a marble game on the way. We was gone a long time. When we got back, Mr. Hargrove had him [Don] set the water down, then got him by the shoulder, and he spun him around and put his boot to him. And just as he kicked him

[Don], that dog of mine nailed him. He wouldn't let him kick Don. He grabbed him by the leg and bit him pretty bad.

So they just kept those dogs around here that way, and they trained them to be ornery. And people coming in town with other dogs heard about these dogs being fighting dogs. They'd bring their dog in to fight, too—bet on and have nice beer parties and have a big betting thing going on the dogs. [laughter]

Fourth of July, they had horse races and three-legged races, horseshoe contests, and single jacking and double jacking. They'd haul a big boulder uptown, and these miners would get together, and two of them would use the double jack. One would turn the drill, and the other one would beat on it. And the single jackers, some of them guys, you'd be surprised how far they'd put a hole in a rock with an old steel. God, they was good! If I'd had to do what those old guys did . . . They'd set in there and do that in those mines all day long, putting in a round.

So your dad was constable then for a while?

BW: Yes, he was constable for quite a few years. Him and old Bing Crosby used to get together up here and sing in the saloon.

Which saloon?

BW: Up there where Kirby lives. Dad had that, too, I think, at one time.

MW: No one recorded it.

BW: I don't know why they didn't.

Are there even any pictures?

BW: I don't know whether my sister's got any pictures at all or not. Jack Dempsey was here for quite a while in training. I think the altitude was one of the reasons he came

up. He brought him some greyhound dogs, and he'd take them down to Squaw Valley in the late fall and wintertime and hunt coyotes with them, and he was a real nice, old guy. I think he trained here for one of his last fights, because he'd get out and run up and down the roads. He had a mine up the canyon up there—the Dempsey Mine they called it. He'd leave town here in the morning, and he'd run up to that mine. You know where Water Canyon is up here? Well, it was clear almost to the end of Water Canyon. In the evening he'd run back.

That must be that old mine that we went to.

BW: It's quite a dump up there. They tell me now that canyon's almost impassable up there, the flood waters have washed it full of boulders and things—hard to get up. But you can go up the main canyon and over the top of the hill and back.

Yes, I think that's what we did. Has the Squaw Valley Ranch always been where it is now?

BW: Yes, always been there. I think Mr. Ellison, Stanley's grandfather, had that ranch at one time. The first Ellison I knew was Stanley's dad, and he was an elderly man then. But old John G. Taylor had the other ranches—the Upper and Lower Clover and all the way to the river. I wasn't around here when Ellison bought that from, I think it was, Union Land and Livestock or some other corporation [that] had Upper and Lower Clover and sold it, and Ellison got it.

That was Allied.

BW: Allied, yes—Allied Land and Cattle.

So what years was Dempsey here? I got the impression he was here in the early 1930s.

BW: I believe you're right.

And he used to stay with Getchell in his place up here? Or did he have his own place?

BW: Yes, he stayed at the Getchell place. He stayed in that office upstairs. We didn't never used to pay no attention to dates or anything—even in school. I can recall going through our test papers—we never had to date them. Now you put a date on everything. The teacher never asked for no dates. All you had to do was put your name on it.

Makes life a lot easier for us historians when there's dates.

BW: Yes, it would be nicer if everything was dated. I've got a picture that we were just looking at the other day of the Esmeralda Mine over here. John Pilant bought that. He was from Washington, and he developed that—put a mill in over there. And his whole family worked that. We've got pictures of them. They'd come over to Midas here and get their supplies with a toboggan. And it'd take three or four of them to pull it back. It [the picture] showed three of them pulling and one of them pushing to get the load. They'd get a hundred pounds of flour and bacon and beans and stuff like that. That was enough for a crew of people for a long time. It's quite a job to get those groceries over the hill.

I bet! Was there a mill down here at the opening, right where you'd make the turnoff off of the county road?

BW: That was a custom mill that didn't have a very long life. It apparently done away with itself in four or five years. But there was a mill right there on the hill, Diamond Mill. He had a custom stamp mill [for] these guys working their own claims.

The other mills were too busy to handle their [ore]. There used to be a mill up at the Elko Prince, but they'd bring it over here. Mr. Diamond run this mill, and they'd get their ore taken care of there. And there was two or three mills here at different times. I wish there was one here now Of course, I don't advocate any activity around here. I'd rather there *wouldn't* be, myself. I never have been anyplace yet where the big growth ever helped anybody. You know, they come in, they do a lot of work Just like this guy up on the hill, [who] has got the heavy equipment up there, takes all the dirt off the top of the hill and leaves the equipment and hasn't been back.

And did the Getchell Mill burn down? Is that what happened to it, like the Elko Prince Mill?

BW: Termites got that during World War II.

They just closed it up?

BW: When they closed it up, why, of course, it was still private property. But scrap metal was so valuable during World War II, they even got this mill and everything, but the concrete's gone. When I left here in the 1930s, there was a lot of that mill left. The framework and the old stamps was left. But that mill over there, when I left in the 1930s, was a usable mill, and so was the powerhouse. I understand somebody bought the big engines and took them out and used them during World War II somewhere. But I think the mill was hauled out a truckload at a time for the junkyard. There was an assay office over there. And the Jackson still had the gallows frame and the tracks and the trestle, and everything that went to the mill was still there when I left.

It's just about all gone now.

BW: They have these mines open around here, which is supposed to be illegal as it could be. They don't fence any of them. There's one on top of the Midas Mountain, up there where the Elko Prince is caved in. And the Link has an open stope over there that must be three hundred feet long. You can just throw rocks down in there and hear them rattle down there for a long ways.

Yes, and hear them hit water.

BW: Yes, and that all should be fenced so the cattle, horses, or people can't get to it. In the wintertime, the snow blows over those places

MW: And you don't know where they are.

BW: No children should be allowed over on that side of town when there's snow on the ground, and anytime, as far as that goes, if they're not well versed around those mines, because those stopes come up out of the ground from maybe four hundred to five hundred feet down, and there's no dump on top of them. All the dirt was taken down and taken out of the tunnel. If it's a shaft and there's a big dump around it, people will know that there's a hole there.

Now, what are the stopes? Those pipes you find sticking around in the ground?

BW: No, a stope is They follow the vein from down on the working ore levels. They get on the vein, and they go clear to the surface. Sometimes a vein goes clear to the surface, and they might be four hundred feet down, and those people will just stope it out clear to the top. It's much more reasonable to mine it that way, because the ore goes down into a chute, and they can tram it right out. But if it's a shaft, they've got to go through that hoisting and dumping. So if they get a tunnel in, they usually stope the

vein out, and those holes that go up are big enough for people to work in, so they're big enough to fall in.



Was there just the mercantile that Mr. Warren had when you were here?

BW: Well, Primeaux had his store, too.

There were two stores?

BW: Right.

And how many bars? One on every corner? [laughter]

BW: I recall three on Main Street. Well, it was the *only* street. But then there was also, during the time of Prohibition days, bootleggers, too. There were guys driving in and out of here, two or three o'clock in the morning, and they wasn't on legitimate business. [laughter] But I never remember a prohibition officer ever arresting anybody in Midas. There was this constable, Mr. Fox. If a guy would get drunk, he'd want to get him out of sight right away in case anybody did come, because then they'd go to wanting to know where he got it [liquor]. He'd get those drunks and get them either in jail or out of town or something.

And that little jail behind the bar is all they ever had for a jail?

BW: Yes, that was the only one that I ever recall. That was a pretty well-kept building at one time.

Yes, it's just been the last couple of years that it started to [deteriorate]. What about hotels and boardinghouses? Were there many of those?

BW: The Andersons had a boarding-house, and my mother run a boardinghouse. And they had some ladies, just to

supplement an income, [who] would have two or three people they knew real well. They'd give them dinner and put up their lunch for them. But I don't know of any of them serving breakfasts—only the two boardinghouses.

And those were right on Main Street?

BW: They was right on Main Street. One of them was right next to Kirby's, where his place is now. There was a big building in there.

Oh, where his trailer is? Or on the other side?

BW: No, it was down below Kirby's. This side, yes. And the other one was the one we were talking about last night, under that big tree above Kirby's, the first tree above Kirby's. That was a saloon. The back of it was cut off, and they had a restaurant back there, a boardinghouse.

It was that great big, long building you see in pictures?

BW: Yes.

What about a bank? Was there a bank here?

BW: None that I knew of, no.

Do you have any idea where that safe came from that's sitting under that tree?

BW: I haven't seen it, Dana.

Across the street from Kirby's—or has somebody moved it?

MW: I don't know, Dana, I haven't looked for it.

I'll have to look.

BW: I'll bet that was Primeaux's. Primeaux had a safe around the store for years and years. The combination on the safe didn't work. One of the Pilant boys come in, and I remember Art saying to Mr. [Pilant] very plainly, "Well, you can put what you want to in there, but it doesn't work, the combination. I've asked two or three people to repair it, and they've been unsuccessful." So this Pilant boy went in there, and he fooled with it and got it locked. Couldn't get it open.

That might be the same one, because the door's missing.

BW: That was the last I remember that safe, because they had a lot of words over that thing being locked. He done something to it, just took him a minute, and he got it—the tumblers fell in and that was it. And he couldn't get it open. It shouldn't be too complicated, even then, to get somebody out of Elko or Winnemucca or Reno that could repair that safe.



[Bishop and Lorie Ferguson and Joe and Gaynell Keller arrive]

JOE KELLER [JK]: Dad came up here about 1932, and then I was up here and worked along in the 1930s. I can tell you more about the mining and the milling that was going on at the time, but they can tell you a lot more about before that when they was going to school here. There used to be quite the characters up here: Old Kiyi and Hungry Joe and Shorty Scamby and Harry Lawrence and those guys.

BW: Barney Kilgore . . . and Pat Murphy was another one. They made it a point to be characters.

JK: Yes.

GAYNELL KELLER [GK]: Can you think of any stories about them that would be interesting?

JK: Well, we can probably tell them about Tamale Dick.

Tamale Dick? That sounds like a character.

BW: Or the fights and things that they had and the disagreements and so forth. I can recall an awful lot of things that happened here that probably would be very unimportant for anything you wanted to write about.

Nothing's not important. I'm not a typical historian.

JK: Jack Dempsey had a training ring here at one time, didn't he?

By talked about that a little bit. Where was his training ring?

JK: Over up there where the offices used to be.

Right next to Getchell's office?

BW: Getchell's office.

JK: Yes. And then one of the tunnels that's up on my ground was run by Jack Dempsey. He didn't do the work. He used to run up the canyon. That was 1928, when he was training down here.

BW: I couldn't tell you what date that was.

JK: I can't tell you the date, but I know it was in 1928. And then he had that Champion ground. Getchell run that. And then Jack Dempsey used to run up from

here clear up to the top, for exercise, and run back to camp.

Yikes! Hard for me. How did Dempsey happen to end up here, of all places?

BW: Like I told you, I think it was the altitude that they required where he was going to fight.

JK: He and Getchell were great friends, too.

BISHOP FERGUSON [BF]: He was raised up around Wells. How he ended up over in here, I don't know, but he did.

BW: Well, a lot of their fights was at sea level, down in cities, and he was going to have one fight in Denver. I read someplace where he wanted to train at an altitude that was higher, because the air's lighter, and their wind . . .

JK: If he was running up there, [others laugh] he was getting some altitude. [laughter]

BF: I'll bet he was!

LORIENE FERGUSON [LF]: Up there, that's 7,000 feet. Denver is 5,280, "the mile-high city." He was doing better than he had to.

JK: Well, right down here where his ring was. [That's] right around six thousand.

LF: That's just about right.

BW: Somebody told me there was a benchmark, six thousand foot, just right around the bridge up here someplace. [several agree]

Was there a church in Midas?

BW: There used to be . . . The cloth would come in here every so often, but there was different denominations. I think us kids went to every denomination known.

LF: But there wasn't a church itself, no.

BW: No. They just come in here on Sunday and gave their sermons.

Where'd they do that? In the town hall?

BW: In the old dance hall up here.

LF: That fellow from Carson, what was his name, Shively? Does that sound right? Came from Carson.

BW: Is it? I don't remember. I had to put bloomers on and go three or four times. [laughter]

JK: That's enough to turn you off, isn't it?

BW: That was. That was a bad background. Boy, I hated that, to have to sit there for an hour and listen to them guys.

So there was somebody here about every Sunday?

BW: No, not every Sunday, Dana. Off and on.

JK: About once a month or every six weeks at the most, wasn't it?

BW: Yes, it wasn't too often. It wasn't often enough.

LF: Mrs. Clawson used to be a Sunday school teacher.

BW: Yes, she was a schoolteacher also.

JK: Mrs. Clawson was up here last summer.

Mrs. Clawson? [Later it was determined that a Mrs. Jacobson visited Midas.]

JK: Oh yes! She came over and visited Gaynell and I [last summer].

BW: [Ray] Clawson was up here the year before last. He's an old, old man now, but he was here for a good many years.

LF: He was an old man when I was a kid.

JK: And she was, what, about ninety-some?

GK: Ninety-four. I'd forgotten that was her name.

BW: Grace Clawson. She sure wore a stiff collar, didn't she?

LF: Yes.

JK: But she was quite disappointed in Midas. Everything over where they lived, and everything's all gone. Everything looks so much different to her. Well, Primeaux's house was still there, but the store is gone.

BW: It *does* make a big difference; you come back and all your landmarks have been removed.

BF: Well, I couldn't believe it when I first came back. Lorie and I hadn't been back here since 1938 when we left very briefly.

BW: We left about the same time.

BF: But to just look around, I was flabbergasted when I came and seen all of the landmarks that had disappeared.

BW: Right, the mills were gone, [most] of the houses were gone. Cody's house and the schoolhouse and everything was wiped off. My uncle used to live up on top of the hill up there. There wasn't even a sign of him. Houses was gone.

LF: All gone back to sagebrush.

BW: Yes. Can't even see ashes or anything.

LF: No. And the old graveyard, there's hardly anything left of it—maybe one stone or so.

JK: Well, there never was too much in the graveyard there. It never was a very big graveyard. It was pretty small.

BW: Yes, but they kept it good at one time.

JK: They used to keep it up pretty good, but now you can't hardly even tell where it is.

BW: Tony Primeaux and I asked the BLM in Elko if that couldn't be kept up better (they own the ground, you know) and re-fenced. They said it'd take about seven years before they could get permission to do it.

MAN: Why? I mean, what kind of permission do they need?

BW: Well, they need to get the allotment for the money and [for] who's going to do it and what they're going to do with it. It's a good indication of their speed—it takes seven years. [laughter]

MAN: Yes, but you do something they don't want you to, and it don't take seven years.

BW: Just a few minutes.

So how many people do you think are buried there?

BW: Well, there's still—we counted seven identified graves over there.

Huh. There's four that I missed.

BW: There's one of them that's got a very nice headstone over there yet, and the cows have knocked it over. If you could just get those things put back where they belong, because eventually they're going to be separated from the location of the person's body. [Then] they'll just set them up, [and] they won't know [where they go]: they won't be right. All the wooden ones, the crosses and things that's there—just decayed, knocked over.

BW: There's one nice marble one, a lady.

WOMAN: How many people, altogether, do you think were ever buried there?

BW: There were fifteen or twenty in there. They buried two that I know. One man fell in a tank at the Elko Prince one time, in the cyanide tank. And before they could get him out, why, it was too late. Lorieene remembers one that fell into the Jackson when the cable broke. Mr. Cody was running the hoist.

BF: But the Elko Prince Mill, see, that was gone. I mean, they weren't running that anymore when I came.

BW: Well, Ray Clawson was one of them that helped get that man out of that tank up there, the cyanide tank.

LF: Was that the one that was up here when you were working?

BF: Well, no.

LF: OK, but there was a boy that was killed over there when you were working.

MAN: Oh, that was the Anderson boy that was killed there.

LF: But he wasn't buried here at all?

JK: No. No, they was from Reno. He got caught in that big crank. They used to put it on that big motor [to] turn it, and he forgot to take the crank off of it. He walked into it, and it just tore him open.

Was there a road into that cemetery? Or did you have to carry the coffins in or [use] horses?

BW: Just walked in. It's just over this hill.

Yes, but I was wondering how they got the coffins in there.

BW: There used to be a road that went down there, yes.

That'd be kind of a heavy load.

BW: Yes. There was a road that went down to it.

LF: I've got a picture of it. Mr. Brown made the coffins. That was in the wintertime and all the snow. I don't know who it was . . . in this picture. [It shows] just an old wooden coffin.

BW: Just as good as any.



BF: Then that year the crickets came through here, that was in what, 1934 and 1935? Nineteen thirty-six, maybe.

WOMAN: Thirty-eight [1938].

GK: Was it before you left?

BF: Yes, it was before. You were here.

GK: I can remember little crickets on the highway.

BF: Yes, but up here, I think the first ones that came through here was about 1935. I still got pictures of the old mill building where that was just a solid mass of crickets, where they'd climb up the cement to the tin, and they couldn't go up any higher.

BW: Yes. They was a messy thing. Your car would be covered with them, and the roads were covered with them, and everything was covered with them.

BF: They were big. They were about that long.

MW: Huge!

BF: Stand up about that high. Just like a herd of buffalo going through, and they wouldn't go around anything. They'd try to go up over the top of it, wherever they could, and they'd just [devour everything]. Sometimes there'd be sections of them two or three miles wide.

BW: Yes, and you couldn't turn them. Couldn't turn them—no way. Burn them, do everything, and they'd still keep going. If you injured one of them, the others would leave him. They just kept going.

BF: When they came to a fence post, they'd go right up that fence post and down

the other side, but they wouldn't go around it. Now, if you can feature a critter that stupid (I guess it's stupid) . . . but that's what you call having a one-track mind. [laughter]

GK: And they weren't derailed, either? [laughter]

BF: No, but I've actually seen them, stood and watched them, and they'll go right up there, get to the top, and go right down the other side.

JK: Yes, they charged over everything.

BW: What was it? Was it the BLM that put those big trenches and pits in for them?

JK: I think so.

BW: They'd put sheet metal up, and they'd go over the sheet metal, and then they'd fall in the hole and burn.

BF: Well, they had those old sheet metal fences about that high. They couldn't go over that sheet metal, and they'd turn and go down along the fence. Then they had a pit every so far, and they'd burn them in there. They had pits about four feet square and about four feet deep. Then they'd get full, why, they'd throw diesel oil on them and burn them. But that was the best thing—that was the only way they could turn them away from those, [by] putting them around the ranches and places to keep them out of the farms.

BW: We had a lease from Ellison at the time. We had oats and wheat down there and alfalfa for the cattle, and here come the crickets. Boy, it was only three days, and all of that was gone. And this Ray Clawson was in with us, and we grabbed them when they come down the creek and throw them. You know, you'd get mad at them. It was *endless*.

You couldn't do anything about it. You might just as well pick up your bed and leave. BLM tried to turn them. They couldn't turn them.

I wonder where they came from.

BW: Yes, they're going to come again, too.

Every seven years or something?

BW: [They] lay eggs by the thousands, and they never hatched. So sooner or later, they're going to hatch.



(The rest of the Wilkerson oral history consists of two interviews Victoria Ford conducted with the Wilkersons on July 7 and 23, 1998. In the second interview, Mr. Wilkerson's sister, Edna Timmons, is also present. Ms. Ford's questions are in italics, while Mr. and Mrs. Wilkerson's and Mrs. Timmons's answers are in regular type.)

VICTORIA FORD: *Today is July 7, 1998. My name is Victoria Ford. I'm here with Byron Wilkerson and his wife, Mary, in their home in Midas. We're going to be talking about the mines and mills here from the earlier days. We'd better start with your dad. Could you tell me a little bit about your dad and when he first came here?*

BW: He was raised in Tuscarora.

And his name was . . . ?

BW: Lou [Louis] Wilkerson. He came over here when the boom started.

And that would have been around 1907, 1908?

BW: I think it was, yes, because I was trying to compare it with some other date, but I can't remember those dates.

Was he married when he first came here?

BW: No. His mother-in-law had a place here later on, and he married my grandmother's daughter [Mary Ellen Coleman Wilkerson]. They were married right out here this side of . . . Well, there was a ranch out here (it's still out there but abandoned now). They called it the Myers's Ranch.

And that's where they got married?

BW: Yes. And then I don't suppose it was very much longer after that, that they started raising a family, because I had a sister and a brother older than I am.

And what were their names?

BW: Laura and Alex. And then I was the third. Edna here was the fourth, and it went on from there. [laughter] Noreen [Murdock], Jack's wife. Leonard was killed in World War II. And we lost a little brother in Reno, after we moved down there to the ranch.

What was his name?

MW: Little Ed is the one [who was] killed.

BW: Yes. And after Little Ed was Ardis.

And that was a girl?

BW: Yes. And she lived in Winnemucca. We almost always lived right around this country, Elko and Winnemucca and Midas.

So eight kids altogether.¹

BW: Yes.

MW: He found a sister. In 1965 they found her.

BW: You're talking about Dee? We discovered we had that sister here six years ago. She lives in Salt Lake City, but we didn't even know we had her for a long time.

A half-sister?

BW: That is a big question in mind yet, whether she was a result of my father and mother's marriage, or whether there was somebody else inducted in there someplace, because she was adopted. My mother adopted her out.

And now you've located her.

BW: Yes, between the girls. I don't know what started the search, but . . .

MW: Noreen and Ardy.

BW: Yes, the two girls started this [from] things that they picked up. My mother's sister lived in Winnemucca. They knew all of her sons and daughters, and they conversed back and forth, and somehow or another they got to tracking my mother. She went to Winnemucca and lived for a while after her and my dad separated. She was living in Winnemucca then. They knew there was a pregnancy, but they didn't know anything [about] what happened. So they finally got ahold of some of their nieces and nephews, and they just kept snooping around until they found out that she [Dee] was adopted. One of those that lived there knew the people that adopted her, and he was a railroad engineer. Just shortly after she was adopted, they moved to Elko. Then she went to schools there, and she adopted their name. [Then] nobody knew anything

about her. They kept digging and digging until they got the details, and we came together. I'm sure very pleased, because she's sure a swell gal. She raised a family in Utah, of course, and now she's still living in Salt Lake. She's not going to leave Salt Lake. She's got a nice home there.

Now, tell me, after your parents got married, did they live here in Midas right away?

BW: Yes, they came here and lived here. I don't know how long. But Edna was born in Tuscarora.

But you were born here?

BW: I was born here, and my brother and sister, Al and Laura, were born here. Alex, I always called him "Al."

The first three were born here? So you would have spent your real young years here.

BW: Right. I went to grammar school here.

What was your dad doing? Was he mining?

BW: He was mostly a contractor. He had workhorses and teams, and he helped excavate for the mills. This one here was the only one he didn't excavate—this one right here in Edna's yard, right on the hillside, where that notch is out of the hill.

And was there a name to that one?

BW: Yes, it was the stamp mill.

He did work on everything else?

BW: The Elko Prince and the regular Midas mill. Elko Prince had a mill up there.

So he did excavating for the mills not for the mines?

BW: Yes, ma'am. He didn't care too much about working in the mines.

What do you remember about his work? Did you ever see him working?

BW: Oh yes. It was real quaint. He used scrapers. A lot of them were handmade scrapers. And he'd never do any of the blasting, because he always had a man working for him that drilled the holes and blasted out the rock to get the mill sites.

What were these scrapers? Were they hauled by the horses?

BW: They called them Fresnos. (I don't know whether people would know [this] anymore.) Where they got their name or why, I don't know, but they called them Fresnos. And the Fresnos probably moved a half a yard of dirt at a time.

They would level off or dig out?

BW: They would dig out and level off, both. Sometimes they had the wagons haul dirt to fill in.

So this was really a pretty basic operation here, and this was hard work.

BW: Yes, but it's not like it is now. They didn't settle on eight hours a day, and it was ten, twelve, fourteen hours a day, depending on how the job was going, I guess. I don't remember much about his working, because he wouldn't allow us to be out there with it.

So he worked from sunup to sundown when there was work.

BW: Yes.

So you mostly spent time at home and with your brother and sister when you were growing up here?

BW: Right. And then my grandmother, she was down here—my mother's mother. We helped her do her gardening.

What was your grandma's name?

BW: Her name was Coleman, Mrs. Coleman. I was trying to think of her first name—I don't remember her first name. "Grandma." [laughter]

She was always "Grandma." Often that's true. You went to grammar school here?

BW: Right, there were two grammar schools here.

Why were there two?

BW: Well, I know Dana's told you about the old dance hall. Directly behind the old dance hall, on top of that hill behind it, they built a grammar school that went from first grade (they didn't have kindergarten, [and] I don't know the ages that kids went to school). But they went up there to about the fifth or sixth grade. And then over right above town, behind the bar, over there on that hill, they had what they called "the big school." I think it was the sixth grade up through the ninth. And then we had to go to Winnemucca or Elko to go to school from there on.

OK, for high school. But before high school, your family moved to Reno?

BW: Yes, so I went through the Reno High School. I never did go to the Winnemucca or Elko schools.

So what do you remember that was operating here when your dad was working? He was building mills. Can you name the mills that he worked on?

BW: We ought to start with the first one. The Elko Prince Mill was first. It was right up at the Elko Prince Mine. If I recall, it was a fifty-ton mill. It was amalgamation cyanide.

The big mill (we called it the big mill and powerhouse), it was a hundred-ton mill, and it was built and run by Getchell, and so was the Elko Prince. Of course, I say Getchell's—I don't know how many people were the stockholders and so forth. It was his company. And he built a powerhouse over there. It furnished a lot of the town [with electricity], and the big mill over there was all electric.

I was just wondering what they used for power up at the Elko Prince Mill. I'm not sure, but I don't recall any power lines going up there. I know my dad worked in that mill for quite a while. What in the heck kind of power they used, I don't know. It must have been diesel fuel, though.

Any other mills that he helped to build then?

BW: Just those two. There was another mill on the other side over here that I worked at for quite a while, and that was the Pilant Esmeralda Mill.

And you worked there when you were older?

BW: Yes. I was driving truck mostly and working in the mine, too.

OK, but there was a time that you went off to Reno, finished school, and your family owned a ranch over there.

BW: Right.

And then you came back and worked here in the mines?

BW: Yes. We'd bring the cows back here in the summertime.

So let's talk a little bit about that, because that's when you would have had firsthand experience in the mines and the mills, right?

BW: Right. We'd bring the cows up here, and then in the summer, all [through] the summertime, I'd work in the mines and mills.

What do you remember as your first job? Was it in a mine, or was it in a mill?

BW: It was in the mine, the Elko Prince Mine. I was running pumps. They'd got into water and had to have pumps running all the time.

What level did they get into water?

BW: Got to about seven hundred feet [when] they started to have to pump. And then I worked off and on until they hit the bottom down there and hit the fault, and that stopped the mining in the Elko Prince.

And what level was the fault?

BW: It was just a little lower than 900. I think it was 950 or 960 feet.

So you worked there while they went down a couple hundred feet. What method were they using at that point? Were they driving

a shaft there? How were they going about this?

BW: Yes. The original, they went in the tunnel and hit the ore deposit, and then they went down, and they sunk that shaft from there on down. It took several years.

But you didn't ever do anything other than working on the pumps, as a kid?

BW: That's right. Well, I trammed, pushing those cars. It was quite nice, because they also had a couple of burros pulling cars out of there.

So you had to help the burros.

BW: [laughter] Yes. Well, they'd shoot that ore into chutes in the mine. They'd put it into a bin, and it'd come down a chute right alongside of the track. And I was loading the cars when the burros came by.

Was the Elko Prince running around the clock then? Were you working around the clock, or was there just one shift?

BW: It was while they were milling, and the mills [were] running around the clock, yes.

So did you work different shifts?

BW: No, I was always on day shift.

So you worked the pumps; you loaded the cars; you did some tramping. Anything else?

BW: Not at this period of time.

Did you work anywhere other than the Elko Prince when you came back for summers?

BW: I worked in the Link, too.

And was that different?

BW: Yes, it was different. It was quite a bit different when we got down in the Link! I wasn't there during the sinking operation—I was working at the Prince—but later on I went over there, and they were down at about 350, 400 feet. One of the drifts going in there was hot water, real warm water, and the one going north was cold water. So I had to tram ore down there, because the hoist was on top. When they sent the cage down, we would get our ore and dump it into the cage, and they'd take it out and dump it and bring it back. That was just a routine, getting that ore into the cage and getting it out on the dump or take it to the mills. That ore was being milled mostly in the big mill over here.

So at the Elko Prince, you were tramping the ore out, and in the Link you were hoisting it?

BW: Yes, they were hoisting that.

And how did you deal with these two different sets of water? Was this being pumped out, the hot and the cold?

BW: Yes. It was being pumped out, because it wasn't near as high or as much of a pump operation as it was at the Elko Prince. It was much shallower. But the ore, when it ran into the hot [water], they couldn't keep people in there. I don't know just how hot it was, but I know when you were tramping out of there or anything, it was a bad perspiration—you were just sweating your head off. But then they wouldn't let us go into the cold until the next day, [because] your body would have to regulate itself between the hot and cold. Because some of the guys would go down in the hot, and then five minutes later they'd be down in the cold, and there were several guys that couldn't stand it. They were afraid of pneumonia and colds, and there was no

doctor here. So they shut it down before long. I don't know just the reason they shut the Link down, but it wasn't very long. And then I went right over to the Grant Jackson.

So while you were there, then, the Link shut down?

BW: Yes, ma'am.

When you say there was pumping, do you remember the specific kinds of pumps that were used? Did they have a brand name?

BW: The Fairbanks Morris, I know, was the big one in the Elko Prince. And I don't know the kinds that they had in the Link.

You had to keep that running.

BW: Right. Oh, it was electric.

Did it ever need repairs or anything? Did you ever have to work on it or get someone to work on it?

BW: Well, I had to run up that ladder three or four times. I forget how many feet a minute that the water was raising if the pump wasn't running, so they had two pumps. If the power plant was running, we were fine, because you could switch one pump to the next. One pump took it, and it'd pump it so many feet up. Then there was another pump station that'd take it from there on out, because they didn't have a pump big enough to take it clear out through the top.

So it took two of them in a relay kind of situation?

BW: Yes, that's what it was, a relay. If the power was on, we had no problem. But you had cables under the pumps going up to a big hoist. And if the power was shut down,

you had to get those pumps up above the water, keep them above the water, because they were electric. You'd have to keep everything [up] but the suction hoses, they called them. You'd have to keep the motors themselves above that, because if they didn't, they'd just burn them up.

Did the electricity go out?

BW: Very seldom. I think that's why Getchell had two big generators, so that one could take over if the other one was down.

So you seldom ran into any problem with being without electricity.

BW: It was only once or twice that I know of, we had to signal the operator to pull the pumps up. And then you had to follow them with a ladder, but when they got up so far, the water wouldn't raise any higher than that. You'd have to start the pumps again when the juice came on, and then the pumps would have to follow the water down to the bottom. It was interesting, but everything was wet and gooey and slippery and so forth. [laughter] But I liked working at the Elko Prince, I really did.

Why did you like that one?

BW: Well, it was more organized, and there was quite a few people working there. It was a good organization until they got to the big mill. And then, of course, that was isolated from us, being the mill was running down here, and us clear up there. They had a mill of their own up there, and it was a small mill. You know, fifty tons is not very big. This one over here now is going to be a five hundred-ton, so that's another difference in the step, see—and how much faster they do it, and how much better equipment you have to do it with now. I've always favored mechanical things, the easy way of doing it. [laughter]

Yes, it's hard work otherwise. So this was a real organized operation? You thought this was a good outfit to work for?

BW: It was a good place to work. Getchell wasn't out here doing it. He was supposed to be a politician, but the people that he hired . . . they had some real good, knowledgeable men working at Elko Prince. That was a good place to work.

And the Link was not as good?

BW: No, I didn't like the Link at all—not only because of the hot and cold water, but you went up and down the shaft on the hoist like you did all the rest of them. Well, we always called it “Joe McGee,” because it was just a haywire outfit. I don't think they killed a man there, but they'd killed a guy at the Grant.

When you say “killed a guy,” was it because they were not operating correctly?

BW: You couldn't believe the hand-me-down ways. They had a real nice man here that had two boys and a wife, and he was running the hoist at the Grant. Of course, you worked by bells—you know, signals. His name was Mr. Cody. I don't know whether he was being relieved . . . I believe he was. There was probably one or two shifts going, and the hoist was a diesel hoist. But whoever was running that hoist would go there, and he'd go let the cage down; they'd fill it with ore; he'd bring it up. And they had a gate he'd shut [so it couldn't fall]. He'd pick it up that far, and he'd shut the gate, so he and the load wouldn't fall back down the hole. Then he'd have to go back into the hoist house and set it [the ore car] down on the track. And then he'd tram it out to where it was either going to the mill or the waste dump. He'd come back, get on the hoist, and pick that thing up again, open the gate, and let the

hoist go down. The cage would go down, the empty car.

And he did that one day and the brake gave way on the hoist. He'd opened the gate and was just putting the empty car back on there, and down it went.

And there was someone down there?

BW: Well, that was very fortunate. There wasn't anybody down at the bottom. They were out in the drifts. But I quit then. I wouldn't work there anymore, because he was a good friend of ours, and he had two real nice boys and his wife. Everybody liked her. Even as young as I was, I just couldn't understand why they were so cheap that they couldn't have somebody right there at that brake all the time. The brake was this big rod, about this high, and he'd pull that back. Of course, it had a rachet on the bottom, and it'd lock in this rachet that was stationary. There was no way in the world that you could say that's not going to come loose. There should have been somebody with their hand on that brake anytime there was a man there over that hole. That's what happened. I was devastated, so I just quit working there, and I went to work at the Pilant.

So the man was killed?

BW: Yes, it killed him when he went down with the cage.

Oh, I see what happened. So it wasn't somebody underneath, but he went down with the cage and the brake gave way.

BW: Yes. [If] that car would have hit somebody down there, it would have killed other people, you know. It didn't tear any timber or anything off. I don't know how deep it was, but it was two hundred to three hundred feet, anyway. They told me when he got down there, he didn't have a shoe on,

or something. To a kid, that was dramatic, for me to have Mr. Cody go down there and go down so fast that his shoes left. Maybe he didn't have them laced or something, but there was a lot of scuttlebutt about it. So I went to work then for the Pilant [the Esmeralda].

I'm trying to understand, because I haven't been there. You're saying that Mr. Cody was putting the car or the hoist back down, and he was working with that. He had put the brake on, but there was nobody there holding the brake?

BW: Nobody holding it, no.

And it gave way while he was working with this equipment?

BW: Right. Nothing broke. They had these investigations, and somebody said, "Well, maybe some piece of the cable broke, or a connection to the car broke." There's a lot of if's. One of the men that was used to the hoist house and everything could see that the brake just gave way. That rachet released the brake, and it just dropped back. [If] anybody had been there, they would have known whether that rachet was safe or not, because have you ever used an emergency brake on a car? You squeeze the handle and raise that rachet up. Well, that brake was the same thing. But if you're using it all the time, it's right down by your feet, [and] you could see whether that rachet was holding that good or not. But nobody was in there when it gave way.

So in terms of improving that operation, it would have been better to have two people there—one watching the brake while the other guy was working.

BW: That's right. Should have had the engineer (they called him an engineer), and he should have stayed right there with that

hoist whenever there was any association with that car going up. There were men working down there, too, and they should have been protected. But it was just cheapness of having one guy doing a two-man job, and they were very fortunate just one was killed.

Was that the only serious accident?

BW: The only one that I know of. There was a man fell in the cyanide tank up at the Elko Prince, but he wasn't dead when they got him out. [laughter] Now, that was, of course, a lot of talk. The miners would say how unsafe it was [that] you had to walk out across that tank. They called them agitators. There was a big fan in the tank, turning slow, to keep that mixed all the time. It'd keep a certain thickness. There was a plank going across there (that's all there was over that, too), and he was walking across there. Of course, it's all slippery and gooey, and he slipped and fell right in there. But the blade never touched him. There were two guys working right there, and they saw him go, so they ran over there and grabbed him. He'd gotten enough cyanide to make him sick, but he didn't die from it. If he'd have got caught in that big stirring blade that was going around there, it would have just been curtains.

So you worked underground in the Elko Prince, the Link, the Grant Jackson, and then you went over to the Esmeralda?

BW: The Esmeralda. And that belonged to a man from the state of Washington, Mr. John W. Pilant.

What did you do at the Esmeralda?

BW: I trammed and mucked. Same thing. I did a lot of drilling and shooting over there. I was handling powder. I never did get to work in the mill.

How did you learn the drilling and shooting of powder? Was that something that they taught you?

BW: Just about all of us here leased sooner or later. If you were around the compressor, of course, you used a jackhammer and drilled your holes with a hammer. But most of the time it was a single jack and hand drills. The other miners just taught me how to do it.

So while you were tramming and mucking, they would show you how to do that?

BW: Well, when you were tramming and mucking, and you'd run out of anything to muck, why, then you had to do this every day. You had to "drill a round," they called it. You'd go in and drill a round, and then load them with your powder and primers and fuses. After you shot it, you couldn't go right back in because [of] that powder smoke. Oh, your head would get as big as that table, but before you could ever get a stope going out, then you'd have [to have] air, but they couldn't afford to pipe air in to people.

Like over here [now], they've got four-foot pipes going down in this incline, and they're huge. They've got those things pumping air enough down there [that] when the air goes down, it pushes the old air out, and you go down there, it's just like sitting here. Just everything is fresh air, real nice. I never heard anybody ever complain, and they got gasoline and diesel running down in there.

Now, in these other mines and mills, you did not have any combustible fuels at all in there. It had to either be electric, or you just didn't put anything in those tunnels and mines, because they didn't have the means of keeping you from breathing that stuff.

So they didn't pipe any air in for you at all? Or did they pipe some?

BW: The Elko Prince did. They had the big compressors and pipe up there. But that was another thing with the Link: the air down in the Link was real bad. And the Grant—I never worked down underneath in the Grant, but I suppose they had air down there. But Mr. Pilant had air. Just as quick as he could get it, he had air going in there.

So that made a difference on how well an operation was going, too, was whether they had good air circulation and enough men?

BW: And all the men were younger, closer to our ages, and they were real good guys to work around. They were not too knowledgeable, because Mr. Pilant was the manager of an electrical plant up in Spokane, Washington, and he came right from there, down [here]. Some of his relatives owned this property, and they conned him into coming down and carrying on the mine. He'd never worked around them before, but he was a smart man. He was good.

He learned fast, then?

BW: He sure did. He had two brothers about his age, and they listened to what they were told, and they did do a good job. We hauled ore from the [Esmeralda] Mine to American Smelting and Refining in Salt Lake, too.

But most of these others—the Elko Prince, the Link, and the Grant—that was all milled here in Midas?

BW: Yes. All but the high grade. They had to put some of it in cans, because the vibration would sift the gold [to the bottom]. It was heavy, you know. They put it in cans and put lids on the cans to haul it out.

Why the high grade? Explain that to me.

BW: Well, those mills, the fifty-ton or the hundred-ton mill, either, they concluded that when they ran it through the mill, if it was real high-grade ore, they'd probably lose 10 percent of it, because they couldn't mill it all. When Mr. Pilant finally put in a flotation oil system, he tried to save all of that trip, too, but he'd still lose 7 to 10 percent of it. So if it was real rich, why, we'd take it to the smelter.

So you'd take the high grade to the smelter so that you could get all of the value out of it?

BW: They'd take what they called a sample of all of it. Going through the conveyor belt, they'd take a dipper and every so many seconds, they'd take a dipper of that. And they'd assay that right there. They had their assay office, American Smelting and Refining. And they'd pay the man that brought the ore in there, so when he got it over there, he didn't have to wait to mill it. They paid him right there for the ore.

And this was the high grade that they took over to Salt Lake City?

BW: Yes.

Oh, I see. So they would just assay it right as they went, because these mills were not set up to deal with the high grade?

BW: It's only been recently that such a thing as like Newmont and Barrick or any of them . . . They've got those big mills over there, and they're probably the most efficient that you could get. But I think they still lose 2 or 3 percent of the value. They save a lot of that stuff, and they re-mill it to get that, if it's good enough.

So it wasn't that these mills wouldn't work on the high grade. It was that, on the

highest grade, you would be losing too much money?

BW: That's right.

Where on the lower grades, if you lose 10 percent of a lower grade, you're not losing that much money.

BW: You're not losing that much, no.

I see. So the highest grade you would take over to a more efficient mill which was in Salt Lake City.

BW: Yes, because the tailings . . . The tailings, you know, is what results of the milling. They had the tailings ponds, and a lot of them would contract that and take it to another place and mill it again. That was the stamp mill here. I think they were a little more efficient, but they had to have good ore. They call them "custom" mills. They'll take ore from a lot of other people.

Individual leasers, for example?

BW: Yes, and they'd mill stuff for them right here at the stamps. When it was all over . . . this guy's name was Geyman (that owned that mill where Edna is over here). I don't know whether he ever got the benefit of it, or how it came about—the sale of these stamps over here. Those stamps are big chunks of solid iron. The bottom was all slick. But some of these junkers came in here, and they just cut the bottom of those stamps off. It had [become] impregnated [with] that gold and silver [by] hitting that all the time. The other guys took the steel, but these guys, they just cut those things off and took them in, and they made the money. They got the gold out of them.

Interesting. So you did this work when you were a teenager during the summers, and

then what happened? What happened from then for you? Did you stay around here?

BW: Well, when they shut these mills and things down, we'd come up here in the summertime—my brother and I—and we worked on these ranches, haying.

And when did they shut the mills down? When was that?

BW: It must have been in the late 1920s and 1930s, because I wasn't here. We went down to Reno. You can sure be disinterested if they start shutting the mines in a mining town. They start shutting down, it's a sad feeling, because you know you have to move—lock, stock, and barrel—if there's none of that going on. That's all there is here.

There's no income. There's no jobs.

BW: There's no other income from anybody. They [we] don't have anything to work on. The ranches were the only thing.

So then you worked on the ranches for a while?

BW: Yes.

Did mining pick up again before World War II?

BW: No. It stayed low. I wasn't here, of course, but I know the houses were all being torn down and used for wood. When we came back several times (we always came up from Vegas to go deer hunting over here), it just was a dead camp. That's all.

So a few people stayed around, but there wasn't any work, no jobs? Is that when you moved down to Las Vegas, then?

BW: Yes. I actually got into beef. We had these cattle here, and we were doing all right with them. My youngest sister wanted to interfere with me and one of my buddies. We were going on a date, and we had an old car that had a running board on it. Well, she wanted to go with us. She was about five or six years old, I guess, maybe eight. But she insisted on going with me. I went and got in the car, and one of the Pilant boys was with me And we naturally didn't want her around. So I reached over, and I got her hand. This old car didn't have any roll-down windows. I just got her by the arm, and I held her out like this, right next to the ground, and I told Bob (that was Bob Pilant), "Take off!" He took off, and when I dropped her, she fell. She went in and told my dad that I'd slapped her. And boy, that was a no-no.

You were in trouble, huh?

BW: Oh, trouble! He wouldn't want anyone to touch one of those girls! It was all right if they beat on you, but you'd better not lay a hand on those girls! He had four of them. That youngest one told him, and, of course, he's going to believe her. When Bob and I came back off our date, my clothes were out in the yard. I asked Dad what was going on. He said, "You know what's going on. Don't you ever lay a hand on one of those girls, or you're gone! You just get your gear and get out of here!" Well, I had four saddle horses of my own, so I just gave my younger brother the horses and my part of the cattle and everything else, and Bob and I took off.

We went down to Death Valley. We were just running around, and Mr. Pilant was with us. I went over to see my mother in Vegas, and I went to work in a cleaning plant down there. I stayed in the cleaning plant.

And your dad and mom had separated then?

BW: Yes. She was living down in Las Vegas, Nevada.

MW: [It was] 1938, when he came down.

But your dad had all the kids here?

BW: Yes, he kept the kids. He wanted all of us to stay with him. He was the doggonedest guy. He didn't want his girls to get married, and he didn't want us guys to leave. He wanted all of us to stay with him. But I went to work at Boulder Dam then, and I didn't come back for a long time. I guess it was ten, twelve years before I came back.

So you worked on Boulder Dam? You helped build that?

BW: Yes, ma'am.

And then you went to the test site, too, and worked there?

BW: Yes. They figured when the Boulder Dam was done, Vegas was going to be done, too.

What did you do to help build Boulder Dam?

BW: I was operating equipment, mostly cranes. I was lucky enough to start driving truck, and then there was a vacancy with the crane operator. A friend of mine was superintendent there, a fellow by the name of Ben Flurry, and I told him, "God, I'd like to have that job."

He said, "Have you ever run a crane before?"

I said, "No, I haven't, but I can learn."

Two or three days later he said, "You can park that truck. I'm going to send a guy down here with you. You can learn to run those cranes." Then I stayed with that for a

long time, because I liked it, and it was good money, too. They paid pretty good money.

And then you went from that to the test site? Or did you do some other things in between then?

MW: Entered the war.

BW: Oh, I probably did something else.

So you were in Las Vegas when World War II started?

BW: Well, my brother [Leonard] got killed [in World War II], and I just went right up and signed up to go.

Right after he got killed?

BW: Yes. You get mad, you know. He was serving in the Marines, and he got killed in Guadalcanal. This boy that I worked with here, he joined the Marines first—that's how come my brother went in. He was with him when he was killed over in Guadalcanal, so that was a pretty good break for us, you know, to have somebody right there with him. We got the details of what happened—otherwise, you didn't know. After being in there [the war] that long, I saw lots of them [killed]. I felt so sorry for their loved ones and their parents back home, because the dog tags were your only way of identification. Some of them got [blown up] so bad that you might find half a dozen [tags] around there. They'd just pick them up and pass them out, so that there'd be identification of some kind. But they didn't bother too much.

Did you stay stateside during the war?

BW: No, I went almost clear around the world. We started out and went to Africa. [laughter] Oh, God, what a place! We had

boot camp in Norfolk, Virginia, and then they sent us right to North Africa, not far from the Rock of Gibraltar. And then we started going east, chasing Rommel, that German general. We were after him. We went almost to the Suez Canal, but Hitler sent Rommel back to Germany. Things started going apart, quick as Rommel left. He was a real general—everybody liked him, even the enemy. Us guys even admired the bugger, because he was so good.

So when you came back from the war, you were at the test site then?

BW: Yes.

And what did you do there?

BW: I went out there as an iron worker and welder.

Did you ever come back here to work again?

BW: No.

So your mining experience was watching your dad as a kid, and then working up until you were How old were you when he basically kicked you out?

BW: Well, I guess when Dad and I had the agreement to disagree, I was probably about twenty-two, twenty-three.

MW: You were twenty-five. We went together a year; we were married on his twenty-sixth birthday.

BW: Yes.

So for about ten years in there you were around Midas in the summers when you were a teenager?

BW: Yes. I probably would have never left until Dad left. We got another ranch started down here at Spring Creek.

Let's see, you were born in what year?

BW: Thirteen [1913].

So you were here probably through 1933, 1938?

MW: Thirty-eight [1938].

Nineteen thirteen [1913] to 1938. And in Reno off and on in there. Were you ever a leaser here? Or did you always work for someone?

BW: No, we leased over here, right over the top of where this mine [Midas Joint Venture] is running now. We never could have got down to it [the ore they are reaching now], but we leased there off and on.

So you were on top of where Midas Joint Venture is going in now?

BW: Yes.

Can you describe to me who you were working with, and what you were doing up there?

BW: I had my brother [Alex] and Jack Murdock and an uncle—his name was Edward. We went over there and started digging on You [have to] sample this. The only way we could do it then, we could take a stick along with you and dig anything that looked good to you. We had a fifty-five-gallon drum of water and a pan to pan that gold. We found gold over on top of that hill. It was mostly clay. There was no solid rock veins. We took several samples around through there in a big circle about five

hundred to six hundred feet, and we found two or three places where you had pretty good results, and we panned it and then started digging it. That's all you do. You had a twelve-foot stick with a little gold on the end. You just had to keep digging, trying to find it. [laughter] But it was very dangerous. That clay . . . we got underground a little ways, and it'd just slip like two pieces of fat put together. If we put in a round, you had to muck out three times as much as we should, because it was all falling in. It wouldn't stay up. It was very unstable.

We leased there for three different years and two or three months at a time. But then I got friendly with a fellow here that was a trapper. We went up one day trapping, and adjacent to the Elko Prince there's a location they call the Judge. So we got a lease on the Judge. We fooled around there, and we made pretty good money. We'd have to take that and pay these guys over here at this other mill to mill it for us. Of course, they didn't want to make a custom mill out of it. There were two or three people [doing the same thing]. The Esmeralda, when they first started up, they milled some ore over there, and they charged the dickens out of you. But we worked there for a whole year in that Judge.

When you say it was good money, what were you making off that?

BW: We called it good money then. There's so much difference in the value of money, even now. We were getting \$1,000, \$1,110 a month. He had a wife and that's all. I wasn't married at that time. We had a big cave-in up there, and we decided that was deep enough. Somebody was going to get killed.

So you just quit working on it?

BW: I quit leasing then. The first thing, we got so mad at this Getchell outfit for

charging as much as we had to pay to get our ore milled over here.

But you never made a lot up here where the Midas Joint Venture is going in because of that clay ground? It was hard to work?

BW: Oh, it was *hard* to work. The gold was so free that that was one good thing about it. Gordon Warren had a lease hooking right onto ours. The long-legged bugger! I went through school with him; we were good friends. But we were eating together over there, and we were all sitting on the ground eating, and Gordon reached down. Ordinarily, he was over at our dump, but we were over at his lease. And he was just talking about something, and he put some of that dirt in his hands and shook it, and there was gold. You could see it. It wasn't big chunks or . . .

But you could see it?

BW: Boy, he looked at us! "Do you see what I see?" He reached down, got another one, took it and shook it, kept going. You could see a lot of gold in it. That son of a gun made \$1,200—*one day*! It was just a pocket, right next door. Do you believe it? We helped him get it on sheets of metal. We'd muck it on there and shake off what we could that was waste, and then we put it in empty carbide cans, so we wouldn't lose it all. Well, Gordon got \$1,200 out of that. In one day!

Was the ground that much different right next to where you [were leasing]?

BW: Yes, that much different. His wasn't clay. He didn't get very deep, anyway, when he found that. It ran out entirely—couldn't find any more, so it was a pocket right in there, and Gordon was lucky enough to get into that lease. I know he was working alone over there for a while, but he

said, boy, it was hard to make a dollar. I don't know just when Gordon got an infection in his leg, but he lost a leg. He went down to Reno and went to dealing and learned how to deal, and he was dealing in one of the casinos down there for a while.

So when you were working on the surface up there, you never got down very deep?

BW: No, we were on a steep hillside, and we were running a tunnel straight in. We never got to even go in there far enough to put tracks in, because it was just no good. Every time we'd put in a round and then shoot it, we'd just come back and the tunnel was half full all along. That was no good. You just had to work your fanny off over there to go ahead further. If we'd have gone further, we might have gotten more [of the] better ore. But I've crawled in there when the stuff was just like grease. If you crawl in there, you might get in there ahead of it and look back, and there won't be any daylight you can see. It's that unstable.

So are you surprised now at the operation that's going in over there?

BW: Oh, I think it's just the greatest of all the mines that I ever worked in. Of course, these guys here, a lot of them are Round Mountain natives. They'll tell you old Fred [Bauchrowitz] is just a wonderful manager. He's just great at it.

But you mentioned earlier that you had no idea that it was so deep, that they had to go down so deep on this?

BW: Well, not until Kennie [Ken Snyder] told us. He said, "If we can get a mine started here, we're not going to fool around here at one hundred or two hundred feet. The values are down deep."

I said, "What do you mean by 'deep'?"

He said, "I think 2,500 feet would be a good place to start." Of course, he got the stockholders, and they started hiring some of these drills. They got two or three drills in there. Boy, he was right! He was getting into values to amount to anything down deeper. I don't know how the bugger was so lucky. He hit on that vein—they call it the Sleeping Beauty. That thing is . . . oh, it was a good one! They can work on that for ten or twelve years.

And this is interesting, because they really had to wait for the technology to catch up in order to mine this?

BW: Yes.

You were working what you could do back then, but you didn't have the technology to get down that deep, huh?

BW: No technology. The technology we were using was over a hundred years old. You're just out of luck, because you've a long ways to any source of milling our stuff. You've got to haul it a long ways. Now they're using fertilizer, too, for explosives. We had to get Hercules and buy it by the stick, you know. There's so much difference, it's pathetic! [laughter]

Very different, very different. Because you were using dynamite, not the fertilizer type of [explosive].

BW: No, we didn't use [anything] but that old Hercules. And you can get it in two or three strengths. We were using 40 percent Hercules.

That meant 40 percent dynamite?

BW: Well, I think it's the amount of TNT, and that wasn't 40 percent in volume, because they used a lot of sawdust in it and

a lot of other stuff. It was very easy to detonate. This stuff that they're using now, they run over it with the trucks, and they [can] do anything with it. [laughter] You'd better not do that [with dynamite]. Gosh, I've seen these guys here haul it in any way they can haul it in. We had to be real careful about how we handled that stuff. You got the primers for it. You had to keep clear away from it. They were very easily detonated, but it'd do a lot of damage for you. You could drill holes fast enough to get your 40 percent in there. [At] the bottom of it, why, you could lift an awful lot of rock with it.

Yes. And then they've got different technology for hauling the ore, too. I've stood next to some of these trucks, and the tires are twice as tall as I am.

BW: Oh, God, yes. We had one, we could get six or eight ton on. If you could haul ten tons, you were way overloaded. The roads wouldn't take it in the first place. And you haven't got the dumping equipment. We were lucky as the dickens if we could get a good dump truck anyplace, five ton. Well, gasoline was cheap. Gasoline was fifteen, eighteen cents a gallon, but it took a lot of it.

To haul any distance?

BW: Yes. I went in the hauling business myself. I had a three-ton Ford truck, and I was hauling from the Miners Gold [Mine] or anybody else that would hire me. You had to dump it in bins, and it was strictly a shoestring affair. In the wintertime there was no affair, because you couldn't haul with those trucks in the wintertime. [laughter]

Because the roads would be too . . . You'd get too much snow?

BW: Yes, and it was slick in the snow and mud. These trucks, they weren't made for it. They couldn't do it. That one of mine, I tried every way in the world to get dual wheels for it, but I never could get them. I parked it one night with a load on it, and got in the next morning (they wanted me to get out early), so I put it in first gear real easily. I couldn't move it. So I got anxious, and I floor boarded the gas, put the clutch out, and I left all my tire rubber laying right there. The tread just froze to the ground, and I just walked right out from under it. I heard "Boom! Boom! Boom!" tires exploding. I looked back there, and I didn't have any rubber on the tires. [laughter] I was so disgusted. I said, "Well, I'm not going to do my hauling here, either!" I don't know what became of that truck, because I parked it and took off for Reno or someplace. When I came back, it was gone, and I never did find out what happened to it. But I hauled a lot of ore with it.

Gordon Warren's dad owned that Miners Gold. He was the one that discovered it. He had to build an extra building right next to the change room of his tunnel up there, because he hit that rich ore, and guys were taking it home in their lunch buckets, in their pockets, in their overalls. They were stealing him blind. He had to build another building out there, separate from the other one, because when they came out of the mine at the shift's end, he made them change their clothes, and then they'd go in their birthday suits to this next one. And he'd inspect their lunch buckets, and they had to leave their clothes there. He didn't let them take them, because they were stealing everything they could get. That stuff's all going down the drain now. It's fallen in and deteriorated. It's sad to see what a nice thing he had going there, and now it's . . .

It hasn't been worked or kept up at all?

BW: No, and it's caving in. Barrick bought it all now. It's going to be another one of these big earthmoving deals. I don't know why these guys here didn't get it.

Why Midas didn't get it?

BW: Yes. I told old Ken two or three times, "Ken, there's gold up in that canyon, the same as there is over there." And there's a lot of it, because the Elko Prince was right on the other end, on the opposite side of the mountain. The Elko Prince was over here, coming this way, and the Miners Gold was up here, and it was going towards it.

Oh, on that same vein as the Sleeping Beauty?

BW: Yes. Well, Herbert Hoover was supposed to have been a very famous mining engineer. He went through the Elko Prince. And I don't know that he went into Miners Gold or not. But someplace in there, there's a beautiful, big vein with a lot of gold in it. And I'm afraid Barrick's going to be the one that gets it.

Chevron and Standard Oil Company had a lot of drills right on the other side of the canyon. Of course, you could ask them if they ever found anything, and they wouldn't tell you nothing. I don't blame them. If somebody had had a big mining outfit, they'd have taken it right away from them. But it's there, yet. Jack Dempsey had some on the other side with real good ore in it. It didn't last long, either. He could get more for one heavyweight fight than he could get by taking a mountain down.

Some of these days this place will just be Al Gore, if he stays in office, he probably won't let them do it! [laughter] It'll just be a big, flat nothing. They'll just mine the whole area and the rest of it, kill all the sagebrush and everything.

Yes. Boy, it would change this town a lot.

BW: Yes, it would.



(The following is the second interview conducted by Victoria Ford with the Wilkersons on July 23, 1998. The interview included Byron Wilkerson and his wife, Mary, and his sister, Edna Timmons.)

VICTORIA FORD: *Byron, let's start with the location of the different mines that were operating when you were here and the ownership of them. Maybe you want to start from the Esmeralda and work from south to north. Is that the best way?*

BW: Yes. Vikki, you've got it wrong. South to north is right. The Esmeralda is the south.

Where was that?

BW: That is south of Midas. It's two or two-and-a-half miles.

And where is that located from where Midas Joint Venture is working today?

BW: Almost in the same vicinity. It's just the very extreme south end of where they're working now.

Are there any remnants still in existence of what was there?

BW: At the Esmeralda? Well, you can see a gallows frame.

What's a gallows frame?

BW: That's the frame that they built over shafts so they could hoist the ore out of the hole, or waste, whatever they were

getting. Too much of it was waste! [laughter] Also, a mill building is still at the Esmeralda. That was owned by Mr. J.W. Pilant.

Describe where some of the others [are located], if we worked back through Midas.

BW: We're going to the north. And see, there was none of these mines that was actually in Midas. On that side of the creek, there are no mines across this road to the west.

So they were all to the east of Midas?

BW: North and east, yes.

And is it one ridge or two ridges over?

BW: It's actually all in the same ridge of mountains or hills. Back East, it's [called] a huge mountain, and here they're hills.

Right. So working from south to north [and located] east of Midas, what was the next mine?

BW: The next mine that was working, that we done some work in, was the Queen, I think. We did some work in another for an old lady that owned the mines and still owns them—her family is from New York. I don't know what their names are. When the Pilants came in, just shortly after, those women wouldn't do any more work on those mines. So they just locked them up and went off and left them, [although] they kept real close track of them. They owned that mine next to the Esmeralda. It's a rich mine, and they knew it, and they didn't want everybody messing with it. That's why they just shut it down.

EDNA TIMMONS [ET]: Charters is the family that is still in New York holding that ground.

BW: I thought Charters were the ones that had the house up here.

ET: Well, they did. But they were in partners with that.

Edna is saying that mine in between the Esmeralda and the Sleeping Beauty was owned by the Charter family. So let's go to the Sleeping Beauty then.

BW: Then the next step up would be the Sleeping Beauty. They owned the Esmeralda? That's actually where this new mine started. That's the Ken Snyder Mine now.

And who owned that when you were here?

BW: That was owned by somebody in Utah, but I don't know who it was. We leased from them, too. That was an oral lease, something they can't do anymore.

Just a verbal agreement?

BW: Verbal lease, verbal agreement.

We'll come back to that, because I want to ask you some more questions about that. Then working on north, what came next?

BW: Working north would be the Grant Jackson.

Where is that compared to where the new mine is now?

BW: It's directly west about a mile and a half.

And who owned that one?

BW: When it started working, it was owned by the same gentleman, Noble Getchell.

And is that who still owned it when you were here?

BW: Yes, ma'am. And the Link was the next one, right next to it. That's also [owned] by Getchell. [It was located] within a half mile or quarter mile.

And then what came next?

BW: Colorado Grande. I don't know who owned it. They did an awful lot of work. We never had anything to do with them, and I don't think they ever milled any ore. They just worked on it, I suppose, as they got stockholder's money. The next one would be the Rex.

The Rex. And who had that?

BW: Unknown to me.

OK. So all of these were right near each other: the Grant Jackson, the Link, the Colorado Grande, and the Rex?

BW: Right. And then would be the Elko Prince above that.

And that's the one that's furthest north?

BW: Yes, ma'am. I'm referring to the mines that really had quite a few people working in them at some time or another.

Right, when you were around here. Elko Prince, and was that a Getchell property?

BW: Yes, ma'am. All I could tell you would be two and a half miles northeast of Midas Township.

And then Miners Gold, was that operating?

BW: That was the last one that was operating, yes.

Was that beyond the Elko Prince?

BW: Well, actually, the Elko Prince is way over here, and the Miners Gold is just over the mountain.

Oh, so instead of northeast, it's more north?

BW: It's west of the Elko Prince.

And who had that one?

BW: That was Mr. Charlie Warren.

Are there any others that we should name in that list, that were going on then?

BW: Well, there's probably a lot of them that were a lot smaller, and they didn't haul anything in or out. Very few of them hauled anything over to the mill. But I was just talking about the ones that had a mill in there.

MW: What about the Eastern Star?

BW: Well, that's so far over.

Eastern Star was going, too?

BW: Yes, that's way east of all the rest of them. I never did work on it. They had a nice mine over there, and they hauled a lot of ore. I don't know who owned it. I know they had a cyanide mill there.

Now, let's do the same thing with the mills, because you and I talked the last time we met about three mills in particular. The

Elko Prince Mill . . . was that right near the Elko Prince Mine?

BW: Yes, ma'am.

Like side by side?

BW: Well, they had the mine right here, and they built the mill adjacent to it.

And so that would have been a Getchell operation?

BW: Right.

When you referred to the big mill and the powerhouse, that was also a Getchell?

BW: Yes ma'am, that's [also] Getchell. That was located right here by Midas. It isn't over a mile, over to where the Getchell Mill was.

OK. And then the Esmeralda Mill, that's . . .

BW: The furthest south.

That's right by the Esmeralda Mine, also?

BW: Yes, ma'am.

OK, and the mill was owned by the same people [Pilants] that owned the mine?

BW: Same people.

So basically, these were the main three that were operating? Were there any others?

BW: Well, there were more men [who] worked in those, and there was more money coming out of them.

Those were the big moneymakers.

BW: Right.

Anything else we should add on the mills? Because most of your work was in the mines? Or you did both?

BW: I did both.

But more in the mines?

BW: Everybody did. That's what you were talking about, how they hired people there. They just don't have such a thing as that anymore. You don't hire out of the mine, and [then] go over there and start driving truck. You're a miner. Those people over there, like this Getchell, he used you wherever he could get you to go.

So if you went to work for him, you might be doing either mining or milling.

BW: Anything around the mines or the mills or tramming or mucking or chopping sagebrush. You just didn't know *what* you were going to be doing [from day to day]. They didn't care how old you were or whether you had one leg or two, as long as you could do as you're told, and that's my opinion of that guy. When I first started down there, I know that I wasn't of age to work in the mines. I think about sixteen or seventeen.

And that would have been illegal, even then?

BW: Oh, sure.

But nobody was checking?

BW: No, nobody was paying any attention. You didn't mess with the senator, you know. He was a state senator. And he was a state senator for, I imagine, about four or five terms. Noble H. Getchell. He was also the owner of the Getchell Mine over here. That was a big mine, and it's working yet—about fifteen miles west of Midas. But it was

a tungsten mine and gold and silver, too. They had a different kind of an operation for milling.

I was lucky enough to get in the Elko Prince on the pumps. I worked there longer than any one job—not that I *liked* it the better, but that’s where I stuck.

So let’s talk about that, because one of the questions I wanted to ask you was about the working conditions. Tell me about working conditions, water problems.

BW: Nowadays, I know these miners are getting a pretty good wage, but up then we were getting around four dollars an hour.

OK, four dollars an hour, not four dollars a day.

BW: Yes, four dollars an *hour*. That was about the cheapest you could get anybody to work. That was just about the price the buckaroos were getting. But you could do various jobs in the mines. And the hours, they had three shifts going. The guys that were working right at the mill, of course, they had a power plant down here. They were using that for electric lights, and you could do good. But a lot of them [mills] didn’t have any lights or anything, so they’d have to work by sunshine, where they could see. After they got the big power plant out here, a lot of these places started working sixteen to twenty-four hours.

So going down into the Elko Prince, what was that like? Did you go underground to work on the pumps, or were the pumps up above?

BW: No, they stayed right at the bottom, or as near to the bottom as you could get it. You walked into a tunnel first, about six hundred feet, and that’s where the big shaft started. You’d get on a hoist and go

down to the various levels. They had several levels that were working. But the pumps were always at the bottom, so I’d have to go to the bottom every time.

What kind of pumps were you working on?

BW: Electric.

What did you have to do to them?

BW: I had to keep them oiled, because there was water going [through it] all the time. I had to be awfully careful of them “freezing up.” They called it freezing up, or seizing, because the dirt was mixed in a lot of the water. They had big, power, grease pumps on there, because when you pumped the grease through, it took the dirt and everything out with it. They had the hoist up on top that was hooked onto them at all times, because the water came up real fast if they weren’t pumping. So you’d have to use the bell system . . .

Do you remember the bell system, what the bells were?

BW: Yes, very well. [laughter] Well, when you started down, you went clear to the bottom. And then when you got to the bottom, you’d just give him one bell. One bell was for stop and start both: if you were in motion and you rang the bell once, he’d stop. And if you were stopped and rang the bell one time, he would start down. Then it was two to raise it. When you were in motion, or stopped, two would take off and go to the top. And if you got someplace up there, you’d ring him one, he’d stop, and then three, and he’d go on down. [In other words] he’d start and go the other way.

You said that several of the mines had water situations to be dealt with. What was Elko Prince’s water situation?

BW: It was the worst, I think, in the Midas area. (They claim now that they're not getting much water out of the Elko Prince, although they're down deeper. They're down a mile now, and they don't have a big water problem.)

And you were down how deep?

BW: Nine hundred.

Nine hundred feet, and you were having a big water problem.

BW: They had two pumps there all the time. Just in case one went out, we'd quickly hook onto the other one. But yes, there was a lot of water coming out of that mine.

How would you describe it? Can you give me an estimate?

BW: Well, I'd say there was a four-inch pipe coming out of the pump. I was trying to figure out here how many gallons a minute. That's the way they determine it now. I'd say they were pumping about thirty gallons a minute—probably not much more than that—because whenever the pumps would quit, you could see the water starting to come up in that shaft, and it was a big shaft. It was as big around as this kitchen.

This room, I'm guessing, is maybe a fifteen-by-fifteen foot area that we're in.

BW: Yes. Down at the nine hundred-foot level, there were two tunnels coming out of it. There was a tunnel that went north and [one that] went south, so that made a big area right there, and both the tunnels held water. There was water coming in both sides.

And it would come to the center area, and that's where you were pumping it out?

BW: Yes. They always had it a little lower there, so that the water from the other two would drain into the pumps and keep it out. Otherwise, the guys had to wear boots clear to their knees. [Today,] they wouldn't let that mine operate fifteen minutes [that way], if one of the mine inspectors came in it now.

Because why?

BW: Well, there were so many unsafe things. For instance, for the power from the powerhouse, there was no feed in from outside. If the power stopped, the pumps were all going to stop. The hose was all electrical, so you'd be stuck.

And the water's rising?

BW: The water would come up. It was all you could do to get a hold of a ladder and go. That would just [barely] keep your feet dry, because the water would be right at them all the time. They'd have to have an alternate system of some kind, so if people got caught down there . . . There was more than one level, too, where the tunnels came in. And if somebody was back in there working and couldn't get the word, first thing you know, he'd look up and the water would be coming at him. But [back then] there was nothing they could do to try to get word to him to get out. We didn't have any phones, and our hats were all canvas with carbide lights on them—no hard hats. And nobody heard of hard-toed shoes. So it was just different. We didn't worry about it.

You didn't worry about it?

BW: We didn't know any better. But now, these guys here have a real light-duty job as far as I am concerned, because, boy, now they don't make anybody hurry or anything else. It's been a proven fact that hurry up gets people hurt.

That wasn't the way it was when you were there? Everything was hurry up?

BW: Hurry up, hurry up. [laughter] No place to eat up there. If you got hurt or something, I think the only way they could get you out of there is some little truck or something to bring you off the hill. Now they've got ambulances parked out there, and an EMT is there all the time, which they didn't have [back then]. They wouldn't put up with that anymore. Thank God there were very few people that were hurt with the amount of people that worked.

Did you see or hear of any accidents while you were there?

BW: Well, there was a man, fell off of one of the agitating cyanide tanks. It had a big blade that goes around to agitate that solution in there all the time, to keep the heavy stuff from going to the bottom. They want it into the cyanide all the time. And he fell in. There were other mill workers there, but all they had was two, twelve-inch planks—one across the top of that big tank, and it was probably thirty feet in diameter. It was all gooey from all the mud and the goo in there, and he fell in there. Well, if he could have swam, he could have probably gotten over to the edge and held on, because there was that much room from the top of the cyanide to the edge of the tank. But this particular fellow that fell in there was a young guy, but he couldn't swim, and he was afraid to go any further, and scared to death because that big blade is going around in there. If it got ahold of him, it'd be taking him right with it. But there were two guys—one of them was named Ray Clawson. He fell on the plank on his stomach, and he got him by the hair and kept his head away from the cyanide getting in his mouth. And then two other guys came along, and they pulled him out.

But these were just planks across; no railings?

BW: Just wooden planks across there. I can remember going across, and they'd get a bow in them from your weight. And they were water-soaked all the time. That gives me the chills, thinking about what happened!

When you mentioned that if the electricity went off, then the water would just be rising, and the hoist couldn't bring you up. Did you ever experience that? Or did you ever know of that happening while you worked there?

BW: I had to go up one time. The pump had quit, the water started up, and I went up to the next level (it was about thirty or forty feet), because at that time the signal cord didn't go clear to the bottom, and I had to go up there to get the cord to try to hook onto the other pump to get it up, because the first one was getting covered with water. So when I gave him the signal to go up . . . He had some problems up there, so he got one pump out dry, but the other one was down there. We got up about five hundred feet before everything got going to where we could stop, start the pump, and then go down as they pumped it out. But sometimes that was real hairy, because if the pump was working at 100 percent, it'd take it [the water] down about a foot every twenty minutes. So it'd take a long time to get it down to where the other one was underwater. Then they'd send the electricians down there to start getting that thing fixed. But it'd be way late at night, so it was just a little hairy.

Because when it did stop, then you not only had to get that foot-a-minute water down, but you had a backlog that had built up from the pump not working.

BW: That's right. The pump was so full, and you had to get all *that* out of there, and there was a good many thousand gallons in there. Well, it was fun, but you didn't get enough money for it at all.

Did anybody make suggestions or complain about the conditions when you were there?

BW: Oh, sure there was a lot. A lot of those guys were skilled, had worlds of experience in mines, and they knew what was going on. But it's the same old phrase, "Well, if you want to work . . ." Like the grocery store. If you wanted to eat, you didn't say anything. You'd go get your groceries and take it home, and payday you'd be . . . How many guys kept track of every ticket? We went over there and got beans and whatever we had to have. We never knew how much it was. We were depending on somebody else to keep books for us. As much as I knew about that Getchell, I really wouldn't trust him to keep track of a package of cigarettes for me.

Because you felt like you got shorted?

BW: Sure. I thought he was doing it, not the storekeeper—he was a doggone good old guy. But Getchell had a bookkeeper down here, Charlie Lyons, and he wasn't a trained bookkeeper.

I want to talk a little bit about this pay thing. What you're saying is that people did make suggestions, but sometimes they got into trouble for making suggestions?

BW: Oh, yes!

You'd lose your job?

BW: If you pushed it, you weren't working very long. You were supposed to do your work and keep your mouth shut.

OK. So there really was no appetite for improving conditions there?

BW: No. There were stockholders involved in Getchell's operations, but to my knowledge, I never remember ever getting a figure of how much he was making. If it was in papers or print, I never did ever remember seeing it. Whether he had to work on a shoestring, or whether it was just [that] he was tight enough that he wouldn't spend any time that he didn't absolutely have to, I don't know.

What was your feeling about it? What was the feeling among the men?

BW: My feeling was that it was being run improperly. But what the heck could you know about it, other than you were in danger a lot of times? My little sister [Edna] and my other sisters would get one or put a lunch together to take up there. And you might be up there ten, twelve hours before you could ever get the chance to eat it. But finally a little restaurant opened up over in town up there, and so then she put out lunches. So I'd just have her put a lunch up every day, and that's the way I got to eat.

There was nothing in the world to say that he couldn't have a little cabin or a little shack of some kind up there with a stove in it, so people could have had something to eat, or if they got hurt and had to rest or [felt] faint or whatever. There were many things that happened—that he could have had a place to keep somebody in there and keep them comfortable until they could get medical help. But they didn't have any such thing. They had a real nice lady living there with her husband. She would have been plenty willing to do it. She even offered to put lunches up for them. [Getchell] didn't want it. It was too close to the mine.

So did a lot of the guys share your attitude about Getchell, do you think?

BW: Oh, you bet! Yes. Vikki, you didn't have time to converse with him unless you went to and from the mine, [that] would be the only times you had to talk to him, because all the different levels and the mill and everything—those guys were kept busy all the time. There was not conversation time. I very seldom ever had anybody come down and talk to me down there.

You just were given your work orders, and you just did what you were supposed to do, and that was it?

BW: Right. The foreman was a very good friend of Getchell's, of course, and he lived, slept, and everything else . . . They had a two-story office building up here.

The foreman was who?

BW: I don't remember what the guy['s name] was, because I didn't like him. Charlie Lyons, he would serve as a substitute for a foreman if something happened to him.

Let's go back to that idea. Explain the system of pay. You had some sort of system of credit at the store and the pay?

BW: Yes. You'd just sign a request, you might call it, or a voucher. Getchell probably had a copy, and Mr. Primeaux that owned the store had a copy. Any time you or any of your family wanted to go in there and get food, they'd go in and get it, and you'd sign this voucher and the amount it would come to. Well, when payday came, he'd just subtract what was on your vouchers and give you what was left. And sometimes I remember it just being . . .

Now, with clothing, they were very tight about getting any clothing. I remember we'd have to try to get somebody to get our overalls and shirts out of Winnemucca or Elko, because he had them there . . .

At the store? Or at the mine?

BW: At [the] Midas store. But I heard one of the guys say that he bought a couple of pairs of overalls or something. His check for the time period didn't cover it, and, boy, right now they were after him. They wanted that money for those clothes right quick. So they quit letting us charge clothes—you bought them elsewhere.

So did you feel like you ended up short of pay?

BW: I did. Naturally, I'm a little gluttonous myself, and I'd like a little more! [laughter]

Do you have any idea how short? For example, Jack Murdock kind of mentioned this, and he felt like he really got cheated out of some of his pay.

BW: Yes, I think we all did. There's so much going out with the family coming in and getting groceries—you don't know how much it is. And I danged sure don't know anything about bookkeeping.

So people didn't necessarily keep a copy of their vouchers?

BW: I think some of the married men did. I think they tried to keep track, because the wife, [or] just one [of them] would go get the groceries, and he'd know what it was, and how much it cost every day. But the single guys . . . And another thing, if you went [in the store in your clothes and then went to work], you'd get soaking wet in thirty minutes after you got there. If you had it [the voucher] in your clothes, it usually was not very legible after a shift. I never used to keep track of it, but I know a lot of times, [I'd think to myself], "I ought to be making more money than this." But you just didn't.

What was the theory about how that worked? I mean, did people think that Primeaux did it? Or that Getchell did?

BW: Well, a lot of them said the storekeeper did it, because they were afraid to mention Getchell's name as being in on anything like that. If it got back to him, you'd be wondering where you were going to work next.

Yes. If you questioned it, you would be fired?

BW: Sure. You had to have proof. I never remember anybody dragging him down and saying, "I think I've got some money coming."

So nobody ever confronted him. It just kind of went on.

BW: This other storekeeper, Charlie Warren, had a little store. His kid Gordon told me a lot of times, "I wish Daddy could have the groceries himself, because you guys are getting taken." If you're going to do something like that, you'd better have some proof if you've got a senator arguing with you. I know any of these great big belly-button judges around here, I know whose side they were on.

On the senator's side?

BW: You bet!

So it wasn't the kind of thing you could take to civil court?

BW: No, I never heard of anybody doing it, either. There was some trouble two or three times on the amount of profits he was getting out of the ore that he shipped out, because they take the bars out. He had a retort over here and an assayer, and they would melt the amalgam down and put it

into bar form. The assayer would take a drill bit and drill through it and sample it. But they had to save the grindings out of the drill bit—everything—because old Getchell wanted all of it, of course. But I don't know how many men he had working over here. I suppose altogether at times he probably had thirty, forty men. That's about the most.

At the Elko Prince Mine?

BW: Yes.

OK. And then how many at the mill?

BW: I think there were about six or eight men to every shift on the mill, and there were two in the powerhouse—three shifts a day. It was a pretty cozy operation for somebody running it. The stockholders did have a real good power plant over here, and that was a new mill, and I think pretty near everything in there was new. It was a good mill.

So the mill was good and had good equipment, but the mine wasn't.

BW: Yes, it was just hand-me-down stuff. Of course, those big electric pumps The Betty O'Neal Mine over here was working. That was one of the mines that was going, and Tuscarora had shut down a lot of them. I suppose you could get a lot of stuff out of those mines from what they had left.

So quite a difference, where the money savings came in, in terms of overhead [between the mill and the mine]. You felt like that happened at the expense of the miners in the mine?

BW: That's right. You'd see some favoritism, but we never saw any there. I never saw any up there. The first one I ever saw was one of those clocks they punched.

We'd punch that clock, and that Charlie Lyons would be up there in an hour to see who was working and who wasn't. And they'd go get the names off there and see whether any of them had been late or didn't show up or whatever.

They had dances once or twice a year. We had a big barbecue pit down here. I never, ever saw him attend, only maybe five or ten minutes at a time, and he was gone. He wasn't ever going to get involved associating with the townspeople, anymore than just getting them to work for him and give them what little money he could give them and let it go at that.

Because when you say there was no favoritism, it's like he didn't care about the workers?

BW: No, he didn't care about [anybody who was] working for him. Some of the . . . They called them engineers. This Cody was one, and he was well-liked. He had a family here. But the fellow that ran the hoist up at the Elko Prince, he didn't associate with anybody. I don't know whether it was just his personality, because most all of us walked back and forth to the mine. But walking down after graveyard, pretty near everybody walked alone.

Was there kind of a "class" structure, like the hoist men and Charlie Lyons and Getchell? Were they "above" the other people?

BW: About the only time that there was much associating was down at the bar. They played cards, and, of course, they'd go get their nose wet every once in a while. They'd get in that bar in there, and you could hear some real stories.

What kind of stories?

BW: Us kids weren't allowed in the bar. [laughter]

But there was really a split, at least in people's feelings, about the management and the workers, is that right?

BW: The men of the town here, I think, got along real good. I never heard of anybody having fights. There were probably ten or fifteen men around here. Some of them worked at these ranches, too. But it was a peaceful little place, and in the wintertime we'd have a lot of fun trying to ski and toboggan and all that stuff.

A lot of play then.

BW: Yes. But walking back and forth to that mine in the wintertime—we were in school—but there was a fellow that ran into our sagebrush pile up there. My dad got him, but he just danged near froze to death. He'd hollered long enough to try to get attention from somebody that he was just hoarse and could barely talk. I remember Grandma or my mother trying to get warm cloths and things on him. He was just about out.

Just about frozen, because that's quite a walk over to the Elko Prince.

BW: In the wintertime, and it's all uphill.

The Elko Prince wasn't the only one that you worked at. You've worked at some others.

BW: I worked at the Link for a little while, yes.

Was it the Link that you said was the better operation?

BW: No, the Grant was. The Esmeralda and the Grant were much better.

Tell me what the comparison was of the Elko Prince to the Grant.

BW: It was just smaller operations. There were four to five men at a time working instead of thirty or forty.

How much ore would be coming out with just four or five men?

BW: If you're going to get any ore, you have to figure that you're going to get that much waste and haul it off, too. So they'd get eight to ten ton of ore per shift.

So eight to ten ton of waste, too?

BW: Yes. And you've got to take it [to] a separate place, of course. And they were right about not mixing it, even over here now. If you had real high grade, you kept it separate from anything else.

What is that about mixing the ore or not mixing the ore? How are those decisions made, and what happens?

BW: Well, if it's rich enough, they're going to take particular care of that, but if it's just regular ore . . . I think over here . . . one of the guys told me over here that they were going to try to get forty-dollar ore. They got five hundred ton.

That's at the Ken Snyder Mine now?

BW: Yes. And they're going to have to mix some waste with that, or it's going to be an unending job to try to keep it separate. The real rich stuff, they know that immediately. I don't know what they're going to do with it over here. They used to take that real good ore and haul it to Salt Lake or San Francisco.

And why did they do that?

BW: Well, they'd get a higher rate. And I've always believed that the stockholders are the biggest stumbling block of the whole bunch, because they wanted those figures on there to loan money to the people who were running the mine. And if they get \$30 or \$40 a ton, it's pretty hard to borrow money on that stuff. If somebody says, "Well, this is going \$500 to \$1,500 a ton," boy, they're reaching for their checkbook, because they were getting their percentage out of it, too.

So when you were working there, they were going for thirty dollars and forty dollars a ton? That was the rich stuff?

BW: No, that was usually the average. You've got to remember gold was only thirty-two dollars an ounce.

Right. So what would have been considered real rich ore that might have gone off to Salt Lake City?

BW: That'd be anywhere from five hundred to ten thousand dollars. And there's been a lot of it shipped out of here at ten thousand dollars a ton.

Why did they ship it to Salt Lake City?

BW: You took a control sample there of everything you had. And that company over there would be right with the owner, and they'd take samples of that [ore as it was] all unloaded. When you got through, they'd go right in there to the office and give you a check for what it came to. You didn't have to watch the milling. You didn't have to watch anything.

They just sampled it and paid you right there?

BW: They paid you right there. Charlie Warren up here, he hauled it . . . out of

cyanide cans. They came in about a twenty-gallon can, and they'd put tarps on the bottom of the truck. Then they'd put those cans in there, and they sealed those cans. When they got through at the AS&R [American Smelting and Refining], they went out and took that tarp and everything out of there, and took it in the mill, and they made every bit of dust that came off of there into a little vat of their own.

Because it was so rich?

BW: It was so rich, yes. Then a tenth of it would be gold, because it's heavy, and it'll go down. But those cans, boy it was fun to watch them take those cans and shake them and beat on them, you know. [laughter]

ET: Get every little grain.

BW: You bet! I don't know about the San Francisco people, but I think it was also owned by the same company, American Smelting and Refining.

So it would have gone either to Salt Lake or San Francisco to that same company. And then when they put the ore in the mills here, they were looking for more of the average value, which was thirty dollars to forty dollars a ton.

BW: Right.

And the mills were set up to process that and to retrieve a pretty good percentage of that, is that right?

BW: If you put ten ton of ore in there, you'd have three hundred dollars. They kept that assayer up there all the time taking samples of the waste coming out of the mill. And if that started getting up there at four dollars or five dollars a ton, why then they had to start doing some adjustments. All the tailings that were over there at the old mill

(the Getchell Mill over here, the big mill), that has been bought and run through the mill probably two or three times.

So are there any tailings around here that haven't been reworked?

BW: I don't think so. We went clear over to the Eastern Star, and that's ten miles over there, at least. Our uncle and Jack Murdock and I and my brother hired a truck, and we went over there and hand shoveled all those tailings into those trucks and hauled it over here and had it milled and made money. So you know their tailings were probably going fifteen, twenty dollars a ton.

So you were the ones that worked on the Eastern Star tailings.

BW: Yes, just the tailings. I just hated that place over there. Those people seemed to me like they were offish [stand-offish]. I don't know whether they came to Midas over here and associated with the rest of us or not. The doggone place had real high sagebrush, and I had my pet dog, too. Well, they went off and left that shaft. It was about 350-400 feet deep, and it was almost vertical. They just pulled all the stuff that they wanted to bring here and just left that big hole setting there. I went over there hunting with our brother one time, this high sagebrush stuff [hid that shaft]. I knew right where the shaft was—all of us did. But that crazy doggone dog walked right across the old, rotten piece of wood across that shaft. I looked up, and he was right over the top of that hole. They say a dog trotting is one of the worst things in the world on bridges or anything, because there's nothing else [that gets it swaying] like that. And you don't know whether to call him or shoot him or what to do. I just knew I was going to lose him, but he got across to the other side.

He did? That's a heartstopping story.

BW: Yes. Our brother liked him, too. Doggone, he was a good old dog.

You were talking about milling the tailings over at the Eastern Star, and then you leased at the Sleeping Beauty, is that right?

BW: Yes.

Can you tell me, is that the only place that you did lease work?

BW: I don't remember. I know we did most of it there. Also, Whitey and I leased the Judge. That's the name of the mine up there. I don't know who started it, but when we leased it, we leased it from Getchell. Well, he owned so much here that you couldn't hardly get by [without working with him]. Later on, he wasn't here enough to even know him. That big mine over there was his, and that was a big operation. I don't know how many stockholders he had involved, but he was a senator, and he invited them all over there. But this smaller stuff, these leases were just nothing to him.

Did you ever talk to him personally?

BW: Yes, I talked to him several times.

Did he ever know that you thought he was gypping people?

BW: No. I never did let him know. That'd been something my dad would have said nix on anything like that.

Because you were a youngster, and you were still living at home, right?

BW: Yes, we were in our teens, all of us that were working here.

So you wouldn't have been allowed to say it, even if you wanted to?

BW: No.

Would your dad or any of the other guys have commented?

BW: No. Mr. Warren . . . he and my dad one time were in partners with that Primeaux that owned the store here. And doggone it, if you said it in a little town like this, it was common knowledge to everybody that lived here. We wouldn't even talk about our girlfriends! [laughter]

We've talked about different problems that came up, like the water in the mines. One of the things we wanted to talk about was transportation problems. You said when you first started working out here, horse power was used to haul the ore?

BW: Yes. There were two or three guys here that had teams and wagons, and they'd haul some of the equipment and the ore, too. But that didn't last long. Some of those first trucks [that] came in here had solid rubber tires on them, and that was ancient.

Do you remember the first truck that you saw here?

BW: It was a World War I truck. I mean, it took probably more men to keep that thing running than it did to do the work.

Really? But it was a truck, not a car, that came in to Midas first?

BW: No, it was a truck. I think there were Model "T" Fords in here.

About the same time that this truck came in?

BW: Yes, when we were kids. Jack Dempsey came in here, and he had . . . I think it was a Buick. It was a real nice car.

And there weren't any sedans—they all had cloth tops. There were some goats in town, and one of them jumped on top of somebody's car with a cloth top (they'll get on anything they can), and it went right down through that top.

Oh no! So your dad would have been hauling with horse and wagon when he started working here?

BW: Yes. He did contract work to get the sites ready. Then in between, if they had another job to do, why, he'd do it.

Did he go on and use trucks, or did he always use horse power?

BW: He didn't have any use for mechanical stuff. I bought an old Model "A" truck, and that's the one that left the tires in the mud. [laughter] He'd go at me every day on that cottonpickin' truck. I had to crank it, and there were guys getting their arms broke, because it'd kick back the other way. And he'd lecture me every time, "Don't crank that thing! Go park it someplace and forget it!" But I was hauling three and four ton at a time from up at the Miners Gold and getting good money for it.

And how much could he haul?

BW: Oh, he could haul five or ten ton if he wanted to, depending where he had to go. He'd rather harness and unharness the horses and feed them and water them than to crank any truck.

He just was not going to change, huh?

BW: He wasn't. Never did. We started to go on a little trip one time, and we were heading for Portland, Oregon. He just all of a sudden said, "Turn this thing around. Let's go home." It was a Model "A," rough riding.

Of course, we knew that we had tires that were going to be busted and all. I was so thrilled about getting into Oregon, but he got out on that dirt just too long. He said, "No, let's turn around and go home."

We were talking about transportation problems and about the road out here. Now, are we talking about the road from Winnemucca to Midas?

BW: No, from Tuscarora over here.

What was it like?

BW: Just one word—*terrible!* [laughter] Oh, [people could drive over it and] make it, but it was damaging equipment all the time. The tires—you couldn't hardly buy tires that would hold up over those rocks. A person had to be careful. One guy here had a bar, and the people in town [Winnemucca] told me that he was going back and forth, getting his beer and so forth to keep the bar going. But he got those guaranteed tires—he'd change a tire twenty-seven times with them in a month!

And how often would he go back and forth?

BW: He'd go back and forth once or twice a week, whenever he had to. He asked me to do it for him one time, and as quick as I got into that tire shop in Winnemucca, I had the spare in the back of my pickup. When I let the tailgate down and that guy saw it, of course, he knew his own tires. He said, "That's Kirby's tire!" [laughter] He wasn't mad, I don't think, but he told me, "I'm at the end of my rope, guaranteeing tires for that jerk. It's keeping me broke trying to keep him going up and down the road!" [laughter] And he was a prince of a guy.

So the road wasn't anything like it is now?

BW: No. This year, Vikki, before the miners got to hauling gravel on it and blading (because Elko County quit it altogether), it was a horrible experience. Didn't you have a Buick up here one time?

Yes, the last trip I came up in a Buick. This time I brought a four-wheel drive.

BW: Well, I looked at that Buick from the porch there, and I thought, "God, I hope nobody kicks up a big rock, because those cars don't have any clearance at all." Our daughter had one, and she didn't use much judgement, I'll grant that. But somebody had a flat tire or something happened, and they got a rock out of the boonies and just put it under the wheels to keep it from rolling while they were working on it. Then they left one setting there, and it was probably that high. She didn't do anything but try to straddle it. [laughter] It just about wiped out that Buick—took all of her steering and everything out.

Was the road being graded at all when you were first out here?

BW: Tim and I quit the end of it.

That was it. When was that, that you and Tim were grading?

ET: 1970s and 1980s.

MW: After we moved here, it was 1980-something.

So back in the 1930s, though, when you were a kid here, was anybody grading the road then?

BW: No, they didn't have anything [to do it with]. Elko County is so liberal with their loot. [sarcastic] Of course, the taxes [from Elko County covers Midas].

ET: [Elko County was supposed to] grade it, and would come over here twice a year.

MW: Well, they promised twice a year. And then they'd come up for two days. They had a little trailer, and they would come up, and stay for two days and lift the blade and take off, go back,

And never touch it? But this is in more recent years, correct?

MW: That was in the 1980s when we first came here.

Yes, because I was trying to figure out if the road would have been similar to what it is now at all, when your dad was hauling by horse and wagon.

BW: No. They were terrible. The road used to come up here [indicating behind his home to the west]. It wasn't down here [to the south] where it is now. That was it, right across from the bar. You'd go around the hill. Well, if you get a chance just to go booning and have an experience, just drive down there. It comes in down at Spring Creek. You get a good idea of what the road was like.

I might pass on that. [laughter] I think I'll take your word on that. How long would it take, like for your dad to take off from here and go to Winnemucca with the horse and wagon?

BW: It was three days.

And that's like, what, sixty miles?

BW: Yes.

Three days! So if he was hauling a load of ore, he was camping overnight.

BW: Oh yes, he was three or four days. I tell you, that'd be a rough go. Besides, it tears the wagon all to pieces, going over those rocks. I can't understand how anybody could make them sturdy enough to keep going. I remember riding in them a lot, and Mom used to put (Al and I were right close together in age, you know) a burlap sack and cut a slit in the top. She'd put me in one sack and Al in another, and hang us over the saddle horn on a saddle horse. I have to tell you, that's just about as bad as riding in the wagon!

You get shaken up quite a bit that way! When you were little kids, that's how she'd hold you?

BW: Then we'd get in fights over there, and punching each other. [laughter]

Through the burlap bags? [laughter]

BW: She'd put up with that about so long, and then you'd really get punched. That third time, when she said, "Don't do that again!" you'd better listen!

Note

1. This would be eight siblings for Byron, rather than eight children total. The girls were (in alphabetical order) Ardis (Ardy), Delores, Edna, Laura, and Noreen. The boys were Alex, Byron, Edward, and Leonard.

DESDA WARREN WOOD

*D*ESDA WARREN WOOD was born and raised in Midas. She is the daughter of Charles S. and Ruth Birda Warren and the sister of chronicler Gordon Warren.



DANA BENNETT: *This is Dana Bennett, and I'm meeting with Desda Warren Wood, Paula Scheuller, and Dan Bennett at the 19th Hole Restaurant in Reno, Nevada, April 21, 1992. We've gathered here to talk about Desda's memories of living in Midas.*

DESDA WARREN WOOD [W]: I had to go to Winnemucca, and I had to go to Elko, so I took a side trip and went up to Midas. Now, that was about 1970.

DAN BENNETT [B]: So Gordon [Warren] was up there, then?

W: Yes, he and Ruby, his first wife. And, of course, it was changed. I saw Edna Wilkerson [Timmons], and I guess she was the only one I knew anymore. I can't remember anyone else.

B: I just saw her a couple of weeks ago.

W: They had a nice little house that they had built.

B: Well, her brother, By [Byron Wilkerson], is across the street from her. That's had to happen since you were up there.

W: I think Al had died, didn't he?

PAULA SCHEULLER [S]: Al died, but you might have been there before he died.

W: I know, but I don't think I saw him.

S: They lived across there, too, Al and Margaret.

W: I do have a magnifying [glass]. It's a wonderful thing. I tote it around.

When was that? [looking at photos]

W: In 1929. [I graduated from] Sacred Heart Academy in Ogden, Utah, and I was just sent home in the summers.

So you left in 1929?

W: Right.

And you were born in Midas?

W: Yes, I was a twin. My twin sister died at birth, and my great-uncle was the doctor.

Dr. Dunscombe?

W: Yes, Edward Dunscombe. He was a French marquis.

B: When we talked before, you said that your sister was buried up there in the Midas cemetery.

W: Yes. I have two sisters buried there. We had another little sister. My twin sister died at birth. She was dead when she was delivered. And the second little sister lived about four days. She was a blue baby.

Were all of you born in Midas?

W: Yes.

At home?

W: Yes. My uncle had an office in our house, the front part. The building was a little to the north of where Gordon lived on the other side of the street.

OK. Where Smokey and Edna's [Schuyler] place is?

W: I can remember one of those long, long, long buildings. Then my parents bought the store from Brady—Hampton Brady [later sheriff in Winnemucca whose

son at one time managed the Mapes in Reno, according to Desda Wood]. I think my uncle had died then. He died probably when I was three or four years old, because I just barely remember him.

Did he die in Midas?

W: Yes, and he's buried there in the cemetery.

B: Do you recall just how many plots or graves there might have been in the cemetery? Any memory of that at all?

W: No, and LeRoy Noble went up there They lived on the other side of us, on the north side of us. He took the name of Taylor. His father's name was Taylor. His grandparents were Nobles. And LeRoy went up and tried to find the cemetery, and he said he couldn't find it. Do you know where that Grant Mine and the Link were?

Missing Link?

W: Missing Link and Grant Mine.

Yes, OK.

W: Well, it was going up on that road, and it was on the right-hand side, on the south side of that.

We were just there Saturday.

B: Yes, we know where the cemetery is . . .

W: Oh, you do?

B: . . . and there's a few markers.

Down in a gully.

B: I'll say four markers.

Well, three with names on them. We identified two others.

W: There were quite a few.

B: There was a fire up there and destroyed all the wood markers. Most of them were wood, I guess. And Edna said she has some memory of it. I guess we're just curious as to how it was fenced or the appearance of it, because there's nothing there now other than sagebrush.

W: Well, they had a fence around it. There had been a fence around it, as I remember.

S: Do you remember what kind of fencing?

B: Picket fence or a wire fence?

W: No, wire.

B: Chicken wire? Because there's still some laying up there.

Barbed wire?

W: I think it was *some* barbed wire. I think so.

B: Was there a gate to it at all?

W: Yes, I think so.

B: There's nothing there now. We can't even find the tracks into it, and we know where it is.

W: LeRoy couldn't even find the cemetery. He said the sagebrush had grown up so.

It is high. Do you remember any marble markers there?

W: I don't remember. You know, when you're that young, and you've been to other cemeteries, sometimes you picture other cemeteries. And I would hate to say. I don't remember.

Did you hear anything about the plans that your uncle had for a townsite, the Dunscombe Townsite? It must have fizzled by then. In 1908 he got an approval from Elko County to have his own town.

W: Oh, really? You know, he was quite a doctor. At one time, I guess, he had been, but he was old. And my mother's family owned a lot of property in Leadville, Colorado, and my uncle practiced in Colorado Springs. But he became interested in other mines and mining [and he invested in grubstakes for prospectors, according to Desda]. So he was in Leadville, and from there, how he got to Tuscarora or anything, I don't know.

Mother came to Nevada further north. She was married to a very wealthy man in New York [William Holbert. She came to Nevada for a divorce, and her father nearly disowned her, because he was so shocked.] And her father was reconciled, because she was going to go and take care of his [Dunscombe's] office, which she did. And then they discovered Midas, and they moved to Midas. In Midas, my mother met my father.

When would that have been? In 1907, 1908, something like that?

W: No, Mother and Dad were married in 1910. So I don't know when they went over there. I haven't looked into it.

And your father did mining before he bought the store?

W: My father had his own mining outfit. He sold that Jackson [Mine] to Noble

Getchell. I guess he had studied, but I don't think he had graduated to be an engineer. I don't think that he worked too much for other people. He always had his own property. And he was in Oregon and up around the Coeur d'Alene [in Idaho]. I can remember him speaking of that. And I guess he came [from] Coeur d'Alene to Midas, but this I'm not sure about. [laughter]

When did he buy the store?

W: Well, I think I was about four or five years old when they bought the store. And they also had the post office at one time. The post office was in the store. They didn't put groceries in until later. They had mostly jeans, and I remember the [miners] coming in to get tobacco—plugs of tobacco. They put groceries in later. And Primeaux's had the store across the street—not directly, but kitty-cornered from them. And Dad would go up and work in his property, and Mother would take care of the store and Dad would . . . But our house was built in back of the store.

B: Like this. [looking at picture]

W: Yes, right.

B: You're standing by the entrance of your house behind the store.

W: Yes, that's the side [entrance]. There were two doors, there were two side entrances there. Right.

Did you have electricity or running water?

W: We had running water. Dad put it in, and he also owned the city water supply/works, because I remember him having to go out and repair the pipes a lot.

S: Who had the water system first?

W: I don't know who he bought it from. I can't remember that,¹ but I can remember Gordon and I going up with him, and the water came out of a cave, like up the canyon, and it was piped down the canyon, down into Midas.

Was it metal pipe?

W: Yes, it was metal.

B: I think one of those accounts of the original installation says it was three-inch, metal pipe, up in the Water . . . What do they call it? Water Canyon.

W: The canyon. I remember. You went up this canyon, and one forked and went off up to where the waterworks were, and the other forked and went up where my dad's mine was that he sold up there—Miners Gold.

B: Yes. Gordon worked in that mine in the 1930s?

W: He probably did. Well, he was pretty young in the 1930s. Gordon was a year-and-a-half younger than I, and I was thirteen when I went away to school. I can remember that—my first year of high school. But Gordon did work. He helped his dad, I know that . . . *some*, I don't think very much. Who knows?

So you went to first through eighth grade in Midas?

W: Yes.

In this building? [looking at photographs]

W: One building was up on one hill, and the other one was up on the other hill, which you can see in this picture. That was the hillside where . . .

Which grades were in which buildings?

W: Well, the primary grades, I think, first to the fifth or sixth grades were up in the one to the north.

The little school?

W: And then, the one on the south was the higher grades—either sixth through the eighth or the fifth through the eighth.

And there was one teacher for each building?

W: Yes.

About how many kids were going to school there?

W: I think there was, maybe

Lela Noble Halsell Hempton?

W: Lela Noble. [She was LeRoy Noble's aunt.]

Was she the teacher there?

W: She taught, yes. LeRoy and I were in the first grade, and LeRoy was her nephew. She taught the first through the fifth. And then, I think, they moved down to Reno. Leslie Noble was her husband, and they had a daughter [Mary Ruth Noble]. I don't think she was born in Midas. I'm not sure.

And who was the teacher when you were in the other grades? Do you remember?

W: Well, I can remember someone by the name of It begins with a "P." Ponstoller, or something like that. I just can't remember exactly what the name was.

When eighth grade was done, did you have a graduation ceremony?

W: Yes, I'm sure they did. I've forgotten now, but I'm sure. It's hard to remember. That's so long ago.

B: Were you in school up there with Edna Wilkerson?

W: Well, she's younger than I am. See, I was just eighty, and Edna's [about three years younger]. And Laura, her older sister, was ahead of me. I think Alex was in my grade, but I skipped a grade. They promoted me a grade, because I was doing second-grade work in first grade or something, I don't remember. But anyway, from the first to the third. Edna was right at the end of it.

B: After you had gone away to school, I know you visited back and forth, but did you ever move back to Midas?

W: Never.

B: Did you come to Reno after that?

W: Yes, I came to college to Reno, then I went down to Pasadena College.

B: Oh, that's right. I saw that Well, then you told me about when you'd returned home from school, and you had taken the pistol from your dad's store, gone up the canyon, and this guy came running by.

W: Yes. Jack Dempsey.

B: When was that? We have him up there in 1931. Would that tie it in with . . . ?

W: Yes, I was up—maybe it was Christmas vacation. And they gave a dance, and I remember Jack

S: The Dempsey Dance?

W: I remember him at the dance, that's all I can tell you. But I had a .22 pistol, and he said it's the first time he'd ever shot a .22 pistol. So I don't know whether I realized who it was or not. I think I did, though, but I'm not sure. He probably introduced himself, I don't know. I would say it was in the early 1930s. He stayed down at Getchells' house.

B: We have him there in the fall of 1931. Then, [he] went up in August for sagehen hunting, and he went back up there and more or less moved in for about a month in about September and October. And it looks like he was out of there, and I can't see where he ever went back after November or December.

I think on the tape Gordon says that he was only there in 1931, and that you can still see the remains (or at least you could then) of the platform where he trained and did his sparring.

W: He trained, I know that, but I wasn't there. I came up for a vacation, and it may not have been in December, because I don't remember any snow on the ground. But I would say it was either in the spring or maybe before I went back to school. And I remember him going . . . I think the dance was that night or the next night or two. And then I knew his housekeeper. He left, and the woman that did his cooking and stuff, and her husband, I think, they stayed there for quite a while, if I remember.

B: I'd read someplace that he had some greyhound dogs.

By said that.

B: By told us that. That's right. He had some greyhound dogs. He had taken

them down to Squaw Valley, because they let him ride the horses down there and, with his dogs, chase coyotes. Well, when he left, the dogs stayed, and they got to be a nuisance down there, and his manager came back. And that was in the paper, the Battle Mountain paper—that he came back to pick up his dogs. But there was a woman . . .

W: Well, it could have been his manager and his wife. But I don't remember anything about the dogs or anything.

B: I called Mrs. Ellison on that.

W: Ellison's Ranch. They managed Squaw Valley, didn't they?

B: Yes.

W: That rings a bell. Ellison. I think they owned it, didn't they? And then Taylor.

B: John G. Taylor was a big rancher in that area.

W: Oh, yes, that's right. And that was coming into Midas, Taylor's Ranch. Meyers—there's the Meyers's Ranch.

B: Right. That's the one that we call Buckingham's Hill. That's Meyers's Ranch.

Do you remember many dances or parties that were held?

W: I remember a lot of dances that they had. Summer vacation, and the boys from Squaw Valley would come up.

S: Was Willy Wilcox there at the same time?

W: I don't remember.

He was quite a bit younger.

W: I can't remember who played the piano, but I remember And then there was someone that played the accordion.

S: Who used to play the piano?

Or the accordion?

W: I know they always had someone to play the piano. And then the accordion man did play. It was fun. Really was. We were young and had a lot of fun. Mother always went to the dances to watch—sat on the side on the bench. [laughter]

S: To watch? I'll have to tell my girls.

W: Dad did once in a while but not very often. And all the women would chaperon us, I guess—see that we behaved ourselves.

Did you have a curfew?

W: Not that I remember. I guess Mother said, "It's time to go home," so we went home.

B: Do you remember where the town hall was that was built in 1927 and 1928, as I understand? Prior to that, up the street about a block north, it appears there was a two- or three-story building, maybe right in the very beginning, 1908.

W: That was an old hotel, I think.

B: Is that what it was? It looks like a boardinghouse.

W: And it was very close to where that town hall was.

B: Who owned that?

W: I haven't any idea. My dad bought that town hall. I think he owned it. They had

a lot of old houses and places there that they owned.

B: When you were up there, were there many fires that you recall? Homes burning or buildings burning?

W: No. We were fortunate, because everyone knew sometimes the water wasn't very strong, and Truthfully, I can't remember any *big* fires. I remember some out in the sagebrush, but they were just small, and they got them right away. After I left, there were some going *into* Midas that I read in the paper about. I can't remember any big ones.

B: Just mystifies me where those buildings went. There were a lot of buildings in town.

W: I know. Up on that opposite hill, where the old road used to come in, I know that there were three houses up there the folks owned. When they were vacant, I used to go (I can't remember the couple of other girls), and we'd go up and play house when it was vacant. And I remember starting a fire in the little stove. I mean, the house wasn't set on fire but [just from] keeping warm and playing in the playhouse and so forth. And they had water piped up there. I remember the water up there. My dad's garage was down below Macy's, and there were some houses down in there, and there's one across the canyon where that creek runs. And I don't know what happened to all those houses. And then, there were some even down the canyon, across from the creek, two or three houses.

B: A lot of them are gone. Most of them are gone.

W: They're all gone.

B: You find piles here and there of things.

In the 1920 census, you and Gordon being six and seven years old, it had a list of about twenty-four men that all lived together in the same building. Would that have been that hotel? Twenty-four men, including Bamberger.

W: Bamberger was an old German couple. And I have a baby bonnet Mrs. Bamberger gave Mother when I was a baby—beautiful lace. But I don't remember anything like that. Well, they lived in back of where the town hall was, and there were three or four houses back in there. But I don't remember . . . you know, when you're a child, you don't pay much attention to adults or what they're doing. Gordon and I . . . see, I was born in 1912, and I would have been older than six or seven.

Well, it was early in 1920. You would have still been seven.

B: How about the Browns up there? Did you know them?

W: Oh, yes, I knew them.

B: Did they have any children when they were up there? Did that show on the census?

W: No, they never had any.

It also showed in the census that a lot of people there spoke Swedish.

W: Yes, there were the Bergs [and the Webers].

The Jacobsons?

W: And the Jacobsons. And Mrs. Jacobson, I think, when he died she

married Mr. Meyers, as I remember, that had the Meyers's Ranch. But I think there were other Swedish as I remember, but I cannot remember anybody's name except Bergs or Jacobsons.

Did they have any kind of cultural impact on parties or things like that?

W: Not that I know of, no. Usually the parties . . . I don't remember, really, any home parties like we have now. But if there ever were any, it was all a public thing at the city hall. And we had our school plays there, and they were usually in the city hall. The ministers, I think they had church. They had that in the city hall. Once in a while the Episcopal minister . . . Because I was baptized in Midas, and Gordon was, and LeRoy Noble, and I don't remember anybody else.

Episcopalian?

W: Right.

B: I thought you were Catholic.

W: No. No, I went to Catholic school. The reason I went to Catholic school, I knew Jane Lewis. Lewises had the restaurant in Midas. And Jane was going to go, and she would be a senior. She'd gone to Battle Mountain to high school. And Eatons had sort of adopted Jane, and they were going to send her to school. So she was going to go to Sacred Heart, and I was going to go to Rolland Hall in Salt Lake, and I wanted to go to Sacred Heart, because Jane was going there. Mother didn't want to send me to public school, you know, and not be there. Mother was kind of fussy.

Of course, Gordon and I . . . Probably he remembers more things, because he was in Midas a lot longer than I was. And his memory would probably be a lot better than mine. You know, when you're in contact and

living in a place, then it comes back to you better. But when you're away from it for many years

B: Any other names or things that . . . family names and so on? How about Rice? That's one of them that's buried up there, who evidently Was he more of the Getchell . . . ? Was Battle Mountain the main place you went in those days or Winnemucca?

W: Battle Mountain and Winnemucca.

B: You did your shopping . . . ?

W: Mostly Winnemucca.

Did people have gardens?

W: Yes. Mother had a goat for milk. She and Dad were very good when we were small children. But I don't think we had a garden. Mother had some flowers and some vines, but I don't remember a vegetable garden. But I know some people did. There were houses that, by going up to Elko Prince Wilkersons lived up there, just where you go up the canyon.

Edna said right below where Dick and Rosalie are.

B: Well, Edna said, too, Jack Dempsey used to walk her home. She was cooking down there at the Getchells, and Dempsey would walk her home, up there, about where the schoolhouse is.

W: Edna was cooking?

B: She said she was fourteen. She cooked for the Getchells when they were running the mining up there, and it was that fall, 1931, that Jack Dempsey came to town, along with Governor Balzar and the state prison director, and they were all sage-hen

hunters. She'd cook for them on different occasions, and she was due, then, to come to Reno to go to school. She was going to the ninth grade and high school started. And all these men realized this was her last night, so they all kicked in, and they came up with a twenty-dollar tip. She said it was just like a gold mine.

W: There was [the] Wells [family], and Gretta was a teacher. And Kathleen and I were real good friends. And she married an Angus [Gretta did] from Paradise. She taught—Gretta did—and Kathleen was my age.

Do you remember any weddings taking place in Midas?

W: Minerva Macy and Charles Lyons. The Lyons were another. She eventually had the post office. And it was up from our store, I remember, and next to where Lewises had the restaurant. And it was one of those long buildings in there. And the poplar trees There were three or four Macy girls: Minerva, Irene, Loriene, and Frances.

Was Minerva the first baby born in Midas?

W: Well, she *could* have been.

That's what Edna thought, she probably was.

W: I was surprised, there was someone by the name of Frank, an engineer, said that he was born in Midas. It was in the paper here about two or three years ago. The transportation

B: Well, Jim Murdock was. Jim went to school up there as a kid. Was he born in Winnemucca? [Discussion about Macy girls and Wilkerson girls and their marriages.]

W: Oh. One of the Macy girls, and I thought one of the Wilkerson girls married a Murdock.

Yes, they did.

W: Because I wasn't there, you see, during all this time.

B: How long has it been since Gordon died? When was that?

Well, it was not long after that tape [with Dana Bennett] was done, I don't think, because that was the last time I talked to him.

W: He was seventy-three when he died. I would have been seventy-four, so that'd be six years ago. Does that sound right?

S: Yes, it does.

B: About 1985?

How long did your parents stay in Midas?

W: Well, they bought the Club Apartments, and I managed it for them.

In Reno?

W: And it had been the old Golden home. It was located where the post office downtown is, and they moved it down to South Virginia. It goes to where Center comes into Virginia Street. It's just off Center. And Ed Bevis had managed the big mine before Getchell did, and he and my father were friends. So they were the ones that owned the apartment house, and they wanted me to come down and stay with them, so I did. I didn't want to finish college right then, so I was going to work in Reno. He was going to open the mining stock exchange in Reno, so they wanted to sell the

apartment house, and I called my folks and told them, and Dad said, "Well, if you don't want to finish college, why don't you manage it for us before we move down?" And I must say that was 1932 or 1933, because I would have graduated in 1933.

What happened to the store?

W: I think they just packed up and left it. I don't think they sold it or anything.

B: But the town pretty well died at that point, as far as the commercial [aspect].

W: Yes, it had.

In those notes I was looking at this morning, Getchell said he left Midas . . . well, he left the company in like mid- to late-1934. And the guy that he was replaced with didn't know anything about running a mine and eventually sold off all the rails, took down the power lines, pretty much killed it, is what it sounds like.

W: Who said that?

It was in some notes on Noble Getchell's biography, there at the [University of Nevada, Reno] library. There was a biography that was put together that he coauthored, and for some reason it was never published.

W: They moved here to Reno. They owned that house on Arlington, right across from a red brick house, right across from where Pat McCarran . . . ? I think it's on the corner of Court [Street]. That's where Getchells moved.

B: There's a woman here in town . . . I have to find out about who lived in that house.

Oh yes? After Getchells?

B: There's two brick houses right on the corner. She lived in both of those, she said, as a young kid.

W: I remember visiting them [Getchells] one time, and he had quite a collection of these miniature, well, whiskey bottles.

There was a handwritten note in there that said, "Must see collection of miniature liquor bottles." I guess he had hundreds of them?

B: That must have been quite a neighborhood. Getchell and Wingfield and McCarran, all in one block.

W: That whole wall, as I remember. It's like at the end, as I remember.

S: I would have loved to live then.

B: Yes, wouldn't it be great? The guy [Ray Frisch, who] supposedly disappeared at the hands of Baby Face Nelson, is on the other corner. Went to the movie one night and never came back. What a neighborhood! You were *raised* in this town. [talking to Scheuller]

S: My uncle was the U.S. attorney at that time and helped a couple of them chase Baby Face Nelson down. And they caught up with him out at Walley's Hot Springs, and there was a shootout.

Well, you know who I think is in one of those houses now, Dad, is C.F. Pinkerton [attorney]. Isn't that the kid that Lori went to school with, her age? His mom and [our] Mom did PTA and that stuff. So did the town do a major production on the Fourth of July?

W: Oh yes! They had big celebrations, I can remember. But I can't remember

much about them. They'd have races, horse races and foot races. I suppose miners . . . you know about those drilling contests, things like that. They made a big production of that, as I remember.

Was there a parade?

W: Oh yes, they always had a parade.

B: I think it's going to be in the hands of you younger people, now. *You* will have to do it.

W: Oh, there were Camels, [people] by the name of Camel.

Oh, I thought you meant camel riding.

W: No, no, no. One of the girls, she was one of those that played the accordion. I can remember, when the war was over, this big parade, and this gal playing the accordion, and people marching in back of her, you know, down the street.

So they had a parade for Armistice Day?

W: She had the parade, I remember, with the accordion.

B: [laughter] Desda, [I] might be hitting a sore subject, but was the marriage of Gordon and Ruby a sore subject with your parents?

W: Well, yes, in the beginning, very much. But Mother accepted it, because she thought Ruby was good to him. I don't know if she was.

S: I remember meeting Ruby.

She was a real nice lady.

B: Ruby and Gordon were together then.

W: Well, she was about fifteen [years] . . . a *lot* older than him.

B: That's what everybody says.

W: It's something we never could understand, let's just put it that way.

B: Everybody says that she was a good person and accepted by the people around her. But, God, it'd have to cause a little fire.

W: Mother was very good to her, and I mean, Dad was, too. They didn't ostracize her, you know.

B: Gordon was working at Harolds Club when I was there. That'd be 1967. I think I lost track of him until he showed up in Midas. He moved back up there, must be early 1970s, was it?

W: I came back in 1967, and Gordon was working at Harolds then. But I came back to Reno, I'd been gone thirteen years [1954-1967]. I moved down to California. Warren, my son, went to Stanford. And then after Mother and Dad died, why, I thought, "Well, I'll move back to Reno." I used to play a lot of golf and bridge and knew so many people. "And then if I don't like it, I'll move back to California again." The minute I came back, why, I soon got right into things again.

B: Are there people from Midas that you knew then, who are still here in Reno that you see, or talk to, or anyone else that might be of some help? Who'd I say I talked to? Oh, you know, the town judge . . . that guy from Elko, and had the casino.

S: Oh, Crumley. [Newt Crumley inherited the Commercial Hotel in Elko,

according to Desda.] Did you talk to Frances [Smith]?

B: I called her, and she said that she never was really *in* Midas—her parents were.

W: Frances and I were very good friends in Midas. We're still good friends, and we still keep in touch.

S: Dear lady.

B: She told me that she was away at school. She visited, but she said she was away at school.

W: Her folks lived there, but Frances went to school.

What was her name?

W: His [her father's] name was Frank Smith. [Frank Smith was the assayer for Getchell.]

B: And he was an engineer for Getchell.

W: He was an assayer.

B: She was going to school, so she didn't really have a lot of involvement.

W: Well, that's true. We were both away to school. We were both in high school then—same vacations. Frances and I would pal around together a lot. And then she lived with me at Club Apartments after she graduated.

B: But I talked to Primeaux, the one who was a judge in Las Vegas. That's the son of Loren?

W: Loring, Loring.

B: Yes, I talked to him. He said he didn't really have much. He left when he was going on to high school.

W: See, I was gone when Loring went to high school. I was probably down in Southern California.

B: He said if Dana was ever down there, Las Vegas, stop in. Evidently, By kind of keeps in touch when he was in Las Vegas. Loring Primeaux, who's the son of Arthur Primeaux.

W: Arthur, and Ellen was his mother's name.

S: Yes, they lived there for years, moved from Tuscarora to Midas.

B: He's the one who told me to call him. He didn't sound disinterested, but it was like, "Gosh, I just don't have that much to tell."

W: He was the district attorney in Fallon a while, too, before he moved to I think then he was in Philadelphia, I guess, that *Christian Science Monitor*, something to do with that. But he was attorney for it, or there was something. His mother was a Christian Scientist. I can't remember, because I was here and he was there. But I never have really been in contact with anyone from Midas, since I went away to school—except Frances is about the only one that I can think of. I didn't even know that Edna Wilkerson lived here in Reno.

S: I did know that. I knew they moved to . . . her dad had a ranch on Grant. Wasn't it on Grant or Baker Lane or somewhere over in there?

B: He was here, and the mother was in

S: The mother had left then.

B: One had left the other, and she worked with her mother in the restaurant up there.

W: She remarried, I remember. [Edna Wilkerson's mother remarried.]

S: Well, By found her in Vegas. That's where *he* ran into her, and she moved in with him. For about twenty-three years she lived with him.

That's how By met Mary.

B: His mother and her mother or Mary were good friends. I wish I'd have talked to Gordon more when he was around about that, because there's so many things there in Midas that he had firsthand knowledge of.

Yes. There's lots of stuff on that tape. It was longer than I remembered it being—both sides of a tape.

W: I might just listen to it when I

[Discussion about Dana's work collecting Midas history.]

Actually, you know who started it was Willy Wilcox, the guy that We walked around, and he said, "She lived here, and he lived there."

And I'm going, "Wow, I've got to find out more about this."

S: Now you're moving up there full-time.

As kids, did you go trick-or-treating on Halloween?

W: Oh yes. Oh, and then there's the Ehlers—Edith Ehlers. They were German [her stepfather was], and he was the most German man. They had quite a big house. It was down on the east side.

B: No, they just came up here to use the place.

W: No, it was south.

Was that considered like the biggest house in town?

W: Oh, it could have been that. Yes, I guess it could.

Was there a community Christmas celebration of any kind?

W: Oh yes. They had a big Christmas tree up in the hall.

Where did it come from? Somebody truck it in?

W: I haven't the vaguest idea where it came from. We had trees. They always brought trees in.

The first year that we spent Christmas in Midas, we had a sagebrush. I wondered where people got their Christmas trees when you were living there. Did you go caroling?

W: It seems to me that one of the teachers had us The town had pretty well died out. All the mines were closed and so forth by the time I finished high school, I guess. There were a few . . . the Devines, they lived there for a while. I'm trying to think of names, but I can't remember.

What kinds of businesses do you remember, besides the two stores and the restaurant?

W: That was about it, mostly. An old shoemaker I can remember.

Yes, I saw him in the census.

W: I can't remember the name, but I don't remember any other. Years and years ago there was another store there. It's down by Getchell's, right next to it. And where the Smiths lived and Boyles and Hargrove. Reno. You know, Jack Hargrove—they lived up there.

Were there many saloons?

W: Well, I guess so. I remember one. It was next to Lewis's restaurant. That's the only one I can remember.

Where was the red light district?

W: It was up the canyon, towards like where you go for Brown's. Before you got there, it was on the east side. I think there were two houses.

Was that a place that was forbidden to the kids?

W: Oh yes, yes. I can remember two very, very pretty girls that were prostitutes, and they wanted ribbon. And they were so pretty, and I wanted to wait on them. Of course, I didn't know what it was all about, you know. I can remember Mother shooing me away and not letting me wait on those girls. I couldn't understand why, because I thought they were so pretty, and they were so nice. [laughter]

B: I think where Elges's is, in the old place, that was one.

How many women were there, do you know?

W: I can just remember these two. I know there were more. And they were *beautiful, very pretty*.

Did they come and go, or did they tend to stay for a while?

W: I think they'd come and go. That Landis . . . [the woman] Jack Landis married, she was a prostitute.

Was there a man or woman who ran the whole establishment?

W: Not that I know of. I think there were just the women.

Independent contractors?

W: They wandered in and left when things weren't very good.

B: Were there any children from your mother's first marriage?

W: No.

Well, if you dressed in white all the time, she must have had to do a lot of laundry.

W: Yes, she did. [laughter] [Black bloomers were in vogue, but her mother wouldn't let Desda have any.]

Was that a weekly thing?

W: I don't know how my mother learned how to cook. I don't know how my mother did all she did. She really was a very smart woman, because she's the one that saved the money and invested it and bought these awful houses. And she ran the store, and she kept me in white clothes. I was seven or eight years old. And finally, she'd get Indians to come in, in the summertime to do the laundry, sometimes. But she learned to cook, and she was a wonderful

cook. She made her own bread. And for a city gal, she really did a wonderful job.

B: Were they married in Midas, she and your dad?

W: I think so.

B: And what was her maiden name?

W: Her maiden name is Holbert. Her grandfather opened the first bank in Wichita, Kansas; and then he opened a bank in Atchison, Kansas, and they moved to Atchison, Kansas. My cousin had all these articles about [how] they used to have a lot of fun, they'd come up the river and they'd party, you know. This is in the 1800s, wonderful times that they had. But her father was very, very strict, and he was against liquor, and Mother was pretty much against liquor, too, but she got so she'd have her cocktail with us and a glass of wine and drinks like that. But she was very . . . Dad, you know, he'd be so tired, and he'd go out . . . I guess he'd hide his little bottle, but he wasn't a drinker.

S: At least not in the house.

W: But he'd only have one or two drinks, you know. You'd see Dad in the candy counter getting a peppermint candy, so you knew Dad had had a drink. [laughter]

That's during Prohibition, too, wasn't it?

W: Yes, I guess, but anyway, she got so that she would have . . . *after* they'd both been down to California . . .

B: You told me they're buried in California?

W: Yes, they're buried at Cypress Lawn. They were cremated.

B: Any other names you can think of that might be in that [Midas] cemetery? There is no record that we can find, I guess.

The only way to look through the old records is to know the names. They don't have it by cemetery.

B: Any of the Smiths or Macys, the Nobles?

W: Now, I don't know where, [but] the Macys must have been buried there. His name was Frank Macy. He was the barber [and also justice of the peace in Midas]. That was another I forgot.

B: The same Frank Macy that was in Midas was a barber here [in Reno]?

W: No, in Midas. They lived next to us. And I should imagine that both he and Mrs. Macy would be buried. And I don't know whether Charlie Lyons was buried in Midas or not. I think they moved from Austin up to Midas.

B: And your uncle would have been mortician and doctor and all of those things in most of those situations?

W: Yes.

Any deaths?

W: And Gordon and I had gone with my dad up to the mine, and I kept saying to Dad, "I can see a lot of smoke." And this girl, she was keeping house for her father, and she was probably very young, quite young. [The girl poured kerosene to light the fire in the stove, and it exploded.] Her clothes caught on fire. And Mother did have some knowledge of working with my uncle, I can remember. And she had a lot of things, a lot of medicines that my uncle had. She kept those, and I think she kept morphine or

something for pain. Because the girl was so in pain, Mother was able to help. But that is really about the only, you know, shocking death to a child that I can remember. I think there were some murders and things like that. One woman murdered her husband, but she got out of it. I can't think what her name was.

B: Your mother went over to testify at that trial. Her name was Young.

W: Yes, Young, that's the name.

B: This Battle Mountain paper that we got quite a bit out of pretty well kept track of you and your mother's activities.

W: Oh, they did?

B: They would say when you were coming to town.

W: I love that! Sure. I love that. [laughter]

B: Your mother went over there for that trial to testify.

W: They lived down the canyon, I can remember. I remember coming home from school for vacations, and the girl and I were friends. I think she was their [Mrs. Young's] niece.

So you think she did it?

W: Everybody thought that she did. Some way she got out of it, but I wasn't there, so I don't know. I knew them, because when I came home, the girl and I became friends. Mrs. Young . . . I was thinking it was Devine. Isn't that funny?!

S: Oh, that's right. Did you ever talk to . . . ? Dale Devine was born in Midas.

W: I thought he was born in Golconda.

You know, I don't know. I think he told Tony he was born there.

W: It's still possible, because there were a lot of Devines always around Midas.

S: Do you know who he is? OK.

B: He's the camper guy.

S: He's Wally Rice's partner in Caravan tops.

W: I know Tiny, his father. One of the Devines had a service station in Golconda—between Golconda and Winnemucca.



Were there any clubs in Midas, either for the kids or the adults—women's clubs or kids' clubs?

W: No. Mother used to play a lot of bridge. Mrs. Smith, Frances' mother, played bridge. Mrs. Ehlers played bridge. That's where I learned. I guess it was whist in the beginning, and then . . . Mother was a good bridge player. But, no, Mother didn't like Midas, and they were always going to get out the next year. The usual mining. They were always going to strike it rich and leave.

B: Did he have any success at mining? Was it just a passion with him? Was there money made out of his mine, or did the grocery store or the general store do that?

W: My dad? Well, he sold two or three mines. He sold one to Getchell. Dad always sold them before . . . I guess this Miners Gold, he had worked it for I don't know how long, and he sold it, and just within a few feet they ran onto this tremendously . . . well, "jewel box" they called it, and the gold was very, very high.

Right after he sold it?

W: Yes, after they got into it. It was very few feet, but it was one of these they call a jewel box, and it was very high-grade gold and a lot of gold. But they got through it, I don't know how many feet. I don't remember that. But the folks supported a lot of people, and they were on their books [debts at the store] in Midas, and they never did collect any money from [them]. One or two years, why, I guess they practically supported . . . [laughter] And you know, when we lived in Hillsdale, I mentioned that. I wrote a little article for the *Bulletin* that they published in Hillsdale. And my mother was so cross with me. I have a picture of us.

S: Now, where was she from originally?

W: She came from New York City. I think she was born in New York City, but as a small girl, they moved to Kansas, because my grandfather opened the banks, and then her father worked for his father in the bank. But they were rather poor people, because they had quite a few children. And he didn't make a big salary—bankers didn't make. But my great-grandfather, I guess, was quite wealthy. And his brother was also an artist. Adrian Holbert, his name was, and I can remember we had a book, *When Knighthood Was in Flower*, and I can remember that he did all the artwork for that book. That was lost, too, but you can get it in the libraries. I've always thought I'd go back and . . .

S: Yes, that's a very classic book. I've heard of that a lot.

W: *When Knighthood Was in Flower*. And I loved the book.

So as kids, what did you do for fun, after school or whatever?

W: I can remember digging a hole in the backyard and filling it with water and wading in it. [laughter] I suppose the dolls. I had a beautiful doll my aunt sent me, but I don't know what happened to it. I wish I had it now. Just things children [play], like tag and hide-and-go-seek. Then when we got older, the girls would go together, and the boys, I guess, and we'd hike up in the mountains and things like that. I can't remember anything special that we did. We'd go on a lot of picnics. We had a lot of picnics, and the women would make the salads. Out at . . . what's the name of that springs as you go into Midas?

B: Spring Creek?

W: Spring Creek. And I can't remember other things that we did. Get bored and read. I always read a lot; I loved to read.

Did you have a telephone in your home?

W: Yes, they had one in the store. It was one of those on the wall that you cranked.

B: What would that be tied into?

The phone line was tied in, in 1909, I think, from Elko and Battle Mountain and Winnemucca and Golconda. They were tied in with the rest.

W: And everybody would listen. It was a party line, everybody listened. I think it was those kind of things that Mother sort of objected to.

B: That *would* be a change, from New York.



Was there any playground equipment at the schools?

W: Oh, they had swings. I remember playing baseball. And me having my nose broken. Oh, I was so mad at my mother! I came home with this great big nose, and Mother was always so sympathetic with everything, you know, us children. And Mother started laughing. [laughter] And for my Mother to laugh at me! I guess my nose was out like this. I remember getting so upset about it. And we played baseball, and you know, games children do. And I remember throwing a ball over these schoolhouses, you know. You'd catch it on one side and the other side—some game we had of that. [Game known as Annie, Annie Over.] I remember riding horseback with Gretta Wells, and I don't know if Frances and I did or not.

B: Was that her name, Gretta Wells?

W: Gretta Wells. The Wellses lived up there, and I don't know what they did. I can remember Mrs. Wells. Gretta taught school. And there was Kathleen, and I think there was another daughter, and she married someone in Paradise or over in McDermitt, someplace over there.

Oh, and then there were the Thompsons. They lived up the street. Well, he was quite a character, and she was a nice lady. And they had two or three extra rooms that they rented. And her daughter married Ernest Clawson, and he was a bank examiner, I think. [First National Bank of Nevada] Thelma! And she taught school. And I think she taught in Midas, too, come to think of it.

B: Was there a drugstore, as such, up there?

W: No. No, they sold—and I guess Primeaux did, too—but there wasn't a drugstore that I know of.

B: What was the name of the guy that was writing the paper?

Benneson.

B: Benneson. Sounds like he was writing for a drugstore.

It was 1914.

W: Oh, that could be, because of course I wouldn't remember.

Was there a soda fountain or ice cream kind of place?

W: I'm not sure. I remember going into Winnemucca and going . . . my first ice cream soda in Winnemucca. There might have been, but I don't know. There *could* have been, and that Benneson name sounds familiar, but I . . . Maybe it's from Battle Mountain.

That's great! Where did your name come from, "Desda"?

W: My aunt's name was Desda, and I was named for [that] aunt. My grandmother's first husband was a captain in the military, and he died. And my grandmother was a young widow when she met my grandfather. As I say, she [the aunt] was a half-sister of my mother's, and she was a very beautiful woman, and she was on the stage in New York. Mother had been on the stage, but just because Desda got her these parts. And it was a famous name—it seems to me Oscar Hammerstein. His father, you know, was a playwright. And I have some pictures of them, of Mother and . . .

S: No wonder. All of that would be so hard to give up and come to a place like Midas.

W: And my Aunt Desda was married. She lost two husbands, and she was going back on the boat to England to marry a playwright in England, and she died of

pneumonia on the ship. Mother was living in Midas at that time. I don't know if it's a contraction of Desdemona, but Desdemona is spelled D-E-S-D-E, and my name is D-E-S-D-A, so . . .

B: How about the two sisters? Were they named, the ones that died—your twin and . . . ?

W: Yes, my twin sister, mother was going to name her Diane. And the other little girl, I don't remember. Gloria, I *think*, but now I don't remember. I was only four or five years old.

So at that time was there a midwife or some other doctor that was with your Mom?

W: I don't know, I don't remember. Evidently my uncle brought *me* into the world, because they said that it was a miracle either Mother or I lived, because the other little twin . . . Mother's water broke *hours* before she was born, and she was born dead, and she was born first. So Mother had it very bad. They said if my uncle hadn't been such a good doctor, that both Mother and I would have died. And he was an old, old man at that time. But you know, Mother and Dad, they never talked too much about it. I didn't even know that Mother had been married in the Waldorf Astoria. We went up to visit my cousin up in Seattle, and her brother came out from Indianapolis to visit his daughter, my cousin. [laughter] She said, "Aunt Ruth, you were married in the Waldorf Astoria, weren't you?"

And Mother said, "Yes." And there's so much I would like to know of my mother's family. I don't know much about them, because they never would talk much about them. I met a lot of my cousins on my father's side and lived with one in Pasadena when I went to school there. But I would really have loved to have known them. You

know, I think parents should tell their children about family history. Maybe it was because it was such a disgrace, getting a divorce, at that time. And I've tried to analyze it since then, why she didn't talk more. And I'm sure that's what it was, because her father was so opposed to it.

S: But people *didn't* talk that much then, period, about anything.

W: I know it.

Let's see, you would have been eight years old when women got the vote nationally. Do you remember that? Did your mom comment on it?

W: No, but I remember at eight years old going back when my grandmother died. They had a home in Buena Vista [Colorado], from her side of the family, and they owned the drugstore and I don't know what else there. And I remember going back there, and I remember soldiers being on the train.

At the end of the war?

W: At the end of the war. But at eight years old, that's mostly And I'd never seen a tricycle, and I was a little large for this tricycle. The little girl next door had a tricycle, and I was always on this tricycle, and Mother would get so cross with me for taking this little girl's tricycle. [laughter] But I was fascinated with it, because in Midas we didn't have sidewalks, you know, and we couldn't

B: Well, we found a baby buggy up around—a toy baby buggy, it looks like—up around by the Elko Prince Mine on Sunday. Just there's no fabric anywhere. It's all bent up.

Well, it's been beaten all up. Yes, it's rusted.

B: It looked like a pretty fancy one in its day. It's got springs on the axle.

S: A toy baby buggy?

It looks like a toy buggy. It's not big enough, really, for a large kid.

W: Have you found many relics and things up there?

Are you kidding? This is the relic king! If it's rusted, he has it.

S: I'd love to have you go up. You should see his place. He's just this history buff. I mean, he *loves* Midas.

B: You have to come up to Midas.

W: Some day I'd kind of like to. It might bring back a few things that I could remember.

S: He'll be telling people he was building that pretty soon. I know it, I know he'll try for that.

B: Another thing you might recall When you would have walked up the road to the north, and before you got to the "houses of ill repute," on the right-hand side there's a mine—big dump that comes right down to the road.

W: Oh, yes, down there. Midas Mountain. We used to call it Midas Mountain.

B: Do you know anything about that mine?

W: No, I don't, but I can remember the dump there, because it used to have all around that mountain, around that mine, when it rained, these lilies would kind of come out, a lot of the flowers. [sego lilies]

Isn't it funny how you associate things like that?

B: Those were still coming out before we scooped it over.

Before you ruined it.

W: They had beautiful flowers up there.

B: Water comes out of that mine—or did—and drained out there on the dump.

W: Oh, I didn't even know that!

B: I can't find any record or anybody who knows anything about it. It must have just been a hole they started at one time.

W: I think so, probably. There were a couple on that mountain, weren't there? Because we were told to be careful, but they're not deep or anything—they were very shallow or something. But we used to hike up that Midas Mountain, that I know. And there are a lot of snakes up there, but we never saw anything. I guess the Lord takes care of all the kids.

B: What about snakes? Did you ever have any problem with them?

W: We had a rattlesnake. It did come right down into the . . . I remember my dad killing one in front of his garage, and I can remember someone killing one right out in the street.

B: They've had some right there.

W: They always did.

Nona Trembath makes it sound like there were rivers of snakes up the main street of Midas.

W: They said there were quite a few up this Midas Mountain, and that was one of our favorite walking places, but I never remember seeing [them] as a child. I can remember seeing a blow snake, a bull snake, and one blew in my face. It's when we lived [with] my uncle. I guess he was still alive. And there was a man who lived across from us, and he used to give me candy. I went over there to get some candy, and he said this snake . . . and I reached down, not knowing what a snake was, and this snake blew right in my face. I guess I was real sick. Of course I don't remember anything about this, but I remember Mother telling it. He said he got a shovel and killed it, but he was afraid it was a rattler, but it wasn't. It was one of these bull snakes or blow snakes.

S: Hm, I didn't know they could do that.

W: Well, I guess a child that young, maybe. I don't remember a thing about it.

That's all my questions . . . Oh, that's what I wanted to ask: Do you remember anybody ever spending any time in the jail?

W: No, but I remember we had an old jail, and it was . . . Oh, there was Mrs. Purdy and Pinson, Mrs. Purdy. She had the post office, too. She had one of these long, old buildings, and it was across from our store, and the jail was directly behind her building, their place.

B: Still there.

W: I can remember them talking about this mining man. I think his name is Savage. He was quite wealthy. And he came, and he had some interest in mining property, and he and some other friend got very drunk one night, and he put his hand up in front of him, to see how good a shot

this other man was. I guess they stopped him this time. [laughter] Isn't it funny how you remember things? And I haven't even thought of that for years—and as a child.

Then another thing. We had an old cave dweller. We called him the cave dweller, and he lived in a cave going up to the Elko Prince Road. And this old man [would show up at] Louie Raymond's house at his dinnertime. And evidently, he had some of this cheesecloth, and it was ripped. So he got tired of this old caveman coming into his house at dinnertime, so he tore up some of these pieces of this cheesecloth and put it in his stew. [laughter] So the old caveman, he'd eat and eat, and he'd get one—this piece of cheesecloth—and he put it in his pocket. But when that was told to Gordon and I, I can remember Gordon and I just roaring! We got such a kick out of that. And, of course, they told it well, which I can only half tell. But he was one of the characters that I remember.

S: You said Mr. Thompson was a character. How did you mean, "a character"?

W: Herbie! Herbie Thompson. Seems like his name . . . I don't know. He'd go out at night . . . [laughter] He had a storeroom that was absolutely filled with things. And they suspected that he stole all these things, but he was a real nice old man. [laughter] And his wife was a lovely woman, a wonderful woman. And her daughter was this Thelma Clawson that taught school. But they always said that Mrs. Thompson must have slept very well—she didn't even know when Herbie would go out on his nocturnal visits.

S: What did he take? Just odds and ends, little things?

W: I guess anything he could find.

S: Nobody ever wanted it back?!

W: Well, I don't know.

B: Knew where to find it, if they did, huh?

S: Well, I'm going to call you Herbie.

B: Call me Herbie! Just what I was thinking . . . if anything's missing, it's up at my place.

S: Don't leave anything out in your yard that's old!

W: Well, that's good. Isn't it too bad that they're gone now. You know that yellow apartment house that we had [in Reno]. They should have saved that. I have a picture of the apartment house, and I have a picture of a home in Oakland that was nearly a replica of the Club Apartments, and they were saving that.

S: That's too bad.

B: Didn't you say it had stained glass in the front of it that was extraordinary?

W: It wasn't stained glass, it was cut glass. And it had figures of vines or flowers or something.

S: Was it a big old home? I remember it! OK, I do remember it.

W: The Golden home [owned by the people who owned the Golden Hotel, according to Desda]. It had the big pillars.

S: Yes! OK.

W: Yes, and it was a *beautiful* place.

S: And it was down near Center Street?

W: Yes, where Center comes into Virginia.

B: Shoshone Coca-Cola.

W: Yes, and it was a shame that that wasn't [saved]. We sold it to Wayne McCloud—Louise McCloud and Wayne McCloud.

S: That's Ron McCloud's parents?

W: The daughter lives in Carson, I think.

B: Your folks went from here to California to retire? Or were they working down there?

W: No, no, no, no. No, they were old. They moved down to southern California, down to Pasadena and Los Angeles. And then, when they were quite old and in poor health, why, I suggested that I was alone, and I thought we'd all be better if we all had an apartment, and I could be with them. So I looked around the Bay area for a nice location. I was living in San Francisco at the time. But I thought it was too damp and cold for them—they were both arthritic. So I found this apartment in Hillsdale. See, my son moved down—he was at Palo Alto. So they were happy, and they moved up, and that's how they're buried in Cypress Lawn. Dad died at eighty-seven, and Mother died at eighty-seven. Mother lived two or three years after Dad did. And they liked it there, and we were close to that Hillsdale Mall. Honestly, they'd both go shopping, and they'd both come back with the same thing! They had twin beds, they had things under the twin beds. In apartments you don't have much space, you know. They had groceries under the twin beds, and they had groceries in their closets. [laughter] They both just loved to go shopping.

That's great.

S: Well, this has really been enjoyable.

This has been great! Thank you.



(The rest of the Wood oral history consists of an interview Victoria Ford conducted with Desda Warren Wood on May 5, 1999. Ms. Ford's questions are in italics, while Mrs. Wood's answers are in regular type.)

VICTORIA FORD: *Today is May 5, 1999. My name is Victoria Ford. I'm here with Desda Wood in her apartment in Reno, and we're going to be talking about Midas, specifically about her mother and growing up in Midas.*

Desda, let's start talking about your mother. Could you tell us—I know she was important in Midas during her years there—but can you tell me just a little bit about her background, what you know about her background?

W: Well, I know that she left Atchison, Kansas, and went to live with my Aunt Desda in New York. And my Aunt Desda's husband was a mining engineer for the British government, and they traveled a lot. They traveled to South America and the West Indies, and they also lived in New York. She was married there. Just when—the date she was married—I have no idea.

So your mother was married in New York for a time?

W: Right, her first husband.

First husband, OK. She started out going with her sister and brother-in-law and traveling all over the world then?

W: Right. Well, no, mostly in South America and Jamaica and that area.

Did she tell you any stories about her travels?

W: Well, she saw that volcano that was at Martinique. I think it was Mount Pelée, but I'm not positive. And she described that. They were going down on a ship to South America when it erupted. Her brother-in-law and the captain took a launch, and they were going to go toward it, but they had to return. She said it was really very beautiful. It was in the middle of the day, and it was just as black as coal, and then with these vivid fire streaks shooting up. She said it was gorgeous, but they couldn't get too close to it.

Because of the ash and everything coming down?

W: Right. And she said there was nearly a foot of ashes, even as far out as they were on the ship.

Oh, my gosh! That would have been very dramatic to see, wouldn't it?

W: Yes. She described that two or three times, that I remember. And they lived in Venezuela, Paraguay, Uruguay, and I've forgotten . . . but never in Argentina or Brazil. She didn't mention those countries or Chile. Venezuela, she mentioned they lived there for quite a while. And they lived on Jamaica for quite a while. Now, what "quite a while" is, I'm not sure. [laughter]

Yes. And this was when she was still single and traveling with her sister, as far as you know?

W: Right. And I guess that she was married when her sister came back to New

York. I think her sister's husband died, and they lived in New York.

All right. Describe the family that your mom came from.

W: Well, I really don't know very much about them. I know that my grandmother died in Buena Vista, Colorado. They owned mining property up in Leadville. I think she had (I don't know) left Atchison, and she was living in Buena Vista when she died. And we went to Buena Vista. Then she was buried in Atchison, Kansas. We went on the train from Buena Vista to Atchison with the body.

Do you remember that?

W: Yes, some of it. I remember having an ice cream soda. This sounds very peculiar. [laughter] Mother had a vanilla, and the girl picked mine up—I had a pineapple—and the girl picked it up and smelled it, and I wouldn't eat it, I wouldn't have anything to do with it, because she smelled it. Of course, she was trying [to tell them apart. They were, I suppose, about the same color, the vanilla and the pineapple. It's funny, certain things that you remember. I was just a child. I remember after we arrived in Atchison, Kansas, the little girl next door had a tricycle, and of course in Midas, no sidewalks or anything, I had never seen a tricycle, and I was a little large for the tricycle. But I was always . . . the little girl would leave it out, and I'd run out to ride on her tricycle.

You were fascinated with that.

W: I was just fascinated with that tricycle. And those are things that I remember. I remember they had a lot of silver on the buffet there, and I guess it was the shining of the silver, that I was

fascinated with that. Nothing else in the house do I remember.

If they had silver, were they a well-to-do family?

W: Well, I think my great-grandfather had . . . he was the banker. But I don't think my grandfather was very wealthy, because they had quite a few children. There was Aunt Ida. Desda was a half-sister. My grandmother had been married before, and she was a young widow when she married my grandfather. Her husband had died, and she had this one daughter named Desda. I don't think she got along too well with her stepfather—my grandfather—and she went to live with her grandparents on her father's side. Then mother had [sisters] Ida and Myra and Maude. I guess three girls and two boys, Will and George.

So it was a large family.

W: And I know Will became a druggist, a pharmacist, but I really don't know much about George. He came to Midas and lived for a short time. He had separated from his wife.

So other than knowing that there's a background of banking in the family, and your grandmother owned some mining property, you don't know much about your family?

W: No. I know my grandmother had a sister by the name of Ida, and I think they lived in Colorado Springs and in Colorado someplace there, but that's really all I know.

Do you know, when your mom lived in New York, did she ever work in New York?

W: Well, I don't know. She was on the stage. Her sister, my Aunt Desda, was very beautiful, and she had a part in a play in New

York, and she got Mother a play in New York. I have pictures of her. But she never would talk much about that. And that's the time that Mother was married. And I do know she was married in the Waldorf Astoria, because my uncle came west, and they were talking about it.

Would that have been OK for her to be in a play at that time? Was that something that her family would have approved of?

W: No. My grandfather was very, very upset about it, and he discouraged her. And he also was very upset when she got a divorce. I don't think he ever had met Mother's husband. They [husband's family] were in the importing business, I believe.

OK. So there was some family tension over how she was living at that time.

W: Right. And I think she ran away from home to go live with my Aunt Desda, so that there was quite a bit of tension between my mother and her father.

When did she go to Midas? Do you know about what year she went there?

W: Well, I think Dr. Dunscombe opened an office in Tuscarora, and Mother was coming west to get her divorce. Now, how she got . . . I know she first went to San Francisco, and he, I found out later through Dana, had an office here in Reno for two years. So I think that was why Mother came to Reno, and then he was going to . . . I think he practiced two years, they said. I didn't know anything about this. And then they went to Tuscarora. Tuscarora had opened up. How long they were there, I am not sure. He opened an office, medical. And then Midas opened, and so they moved to Midas. Now, it was probably in 1909 or 1910. They [my parents] were married at Midas in 1910.

Your parents were?

W: My parents, my father and mother.

So she would have come out in 1908, 1909, somewhere in there, you think?

W: I would think so. Whether she was here in Reno with him very long, at his office . . . I know that she got her divorce [through a judge] in Elko. My knowledge of that time of her life is very sketchy. I just cannot remember . . . I don't think I heard.

You don't think she talked about it.

W: Never.

And Dr. Dunscombe was a relative, is that correct?

W: From what I know, he was a great-uncle.

Great-uncle for your mom, OK. And so she worked with him?

W: Yes, she worked as his house-keeper and also as his office nurse.

And then where did she meet your father?

W: In Midas.

What did he do?

W: Well, he had his own properties.

Mining claims?

W: Yes. I really don't know. I don't think he ever worked *for* anyone. I think that he always worked for himself. But he might have leased properties. I don't know whether he bought them. I don't think he

was that wealthy. I think that he probably . . . Oh, what do you call it when you . . . stake out a claim? I guess that's what it's called, and then he'd work on it.

I see. We should make sure I get the names of your parents down here, too. Tell me their names.

W: Well, Mother's name was Ruth Birda Warren.

OK, and your dad?

W: Charles S. Warren. He never would tell us what the "S" was. He was named after an uncle that became mayor in Butte, Montana. I had an article which I gave to another resident of Butte, and she wrote a book. So I gave her this article about Charles S. Warren of Butte, Montana. My father was named after him.

So did your family, after your parents were married, live entirely on the mining claims, or was there other income?

W: Well, after my uncle died, they bought a store and a post office. Mother really ran the store and worked in the post office, and she kept the books and did most of the ordering.

Well, she must have had some big changes to make, to go from New York City to Midas, Nevada. What would you say some of those were?

W: Well, I don't think she knew how to cook. She learned to cook, and she was a very good cook, and she would even bake bread on a wood and coal range in the kitchen. And of course the regular housework, and I don't think she did very much of that because she had left home quite young.

Would she have had servants or maids or people to do work for her in New York, do you think?

W: Oh yes, I think so. I know they did when they lived in South America, because she told of the servants that they had in South America and the West Indies there, so I don't think she had too much experience in housework.

Yes, that's a pretty big change from servants in South America to baking your own bread on a wood stove in Midas, right?

W: Right, and making the fires, and she did laundry. The Indians came in, in the summertime, and she would always hire an Indian to do the laundry, but other than that, she did it. And she kept me dressed in white until I was about six. I can't remember too much about my childhood, though.

Did she sew your white dresses?

W: Mother did all the sewing. She knew how to sew, and she sewed beautifully. All of my clothes were handmade. How she did what she did, I don't know.

Because she ran the store and the post office, and she kept you in white dresses and took care of you. You have a brother, too, is that correct?

W: Right. His name is Gordon Warren.

There were just the two of you?

W: Right.

Were you born in Midas?

W: I was born in Midas, and Gordon was born in Midas. Mother lost a little girl

that is buried in Midas. I don't think she named her.

But that would be one of the graves in the old cemetery then?

W: Right. I think she was a blue baby, and I was a twin. My twin sister died at birth, and she was born dead, and she was born an hour-and-a-half before I was. And they said that my great-great-uncle had to be a very, very good doctor to have saved both Mother and myself.

Really? With twins, yes.

W: Right.

So he was still alive when you were born, then.

W: Oh yes. Mother said that he really spoiled me. I think I was probably one or two or something like that when he died [in his nineties]. I'm not sure how old He also brought Gordon into the world, and Gordon is a year and Well, my birthday is in April, and his is in July, so [I'm] a year and four months, I think it is, older than Gordon.

Do you remember wearing the white dresses that your mom dressed you in?

W: No. [laughter] But I remember one thing. One of the girls had some—or maybe they were wearing—black bloomers, and Mother wouldn't let me have a pair, and I wanted them so badly. She didn't want black next to my skin. I don't know whether I ever got them or not. I don't think I did.

Was there a reason why she dressed you in white, do you know?

W: Well, I have no idea. No, I don't know. And I have a picture. I think it's both Gordon and I are dressed in white. I think it's in Dana's book, that she wrote.

Interesting. That is just an interesting thing that she wanted for her children?

W: Well, I guess she wanted to get away from the real dark clothes, and she didn't like them or something. I have no idea why she did. I know Gordon, she finally gave up on him. [laughter] I suppose she did on me, too, when I started school.

Tell me some of the other things that she did there. Did she continue doing any nursing after your great-great-uncle died?

W: Yes, she did a lot, and she helped a lot of people. A lot of the miners . . . she knew how to roll back their lid and remove foreign bodies out of their eyes. Then there was a little girl that set a house on fire. She had some medication that was for burns, but the girl died, but it did relieve her pain some. I think she had some medication that was left over from her uncle that she used.

So she was kind of accepted as the town's nurse, then, at that time?

W: Yes, she did a lot of that. She knew how to bandage wounds, which she learned, I suppose, from Uncle Dunscombe.

Now, how long did you live in Midas?

W: Well, I went away to school when I was thirteen. First year of high school, I went to Sacred Heart Academy in Ogden, Utah.

That's right. So you went to school there in Midas, and your mom worked all during that time, did she?

W: Yes, she did. She would help us with our . . . Dad and Mother both were very good about helping us and teaching us, like the multiplication [tables], she would have us go through those; and then spelling, she would pick out things in the story that was up on the cupboards and ask us how to spell. We would learn spelling. Then she would buy these jigsaw puzzles that had all the states and the capitals. She would teach us all the state names and the capitals of each state. She would be working around, and we would be there, and she would ask us a question. They were both very good about helping us.

So she was kind of teaching you all the time that she was also working and in the store, is that correct?

W: Yes, she did a lot of that.

Just you and your brother? Or did she do the same for other kids, too?

W: Well, she did for other kids. I can remember there were two, I think they were German children . . . maybe Swedish. She would teach them, they would come. They had put groceries in by that time, in the store. Before we didn't have groceries. I can remember the little boy came in and asked for some "booder." And I can remember hearing Mother trying to teach him how to say "butter." A few things like that I remember.

So she had kind of a knack with the kids?

W: I think so.

Is there anything more you can tell me about that time? About your mom that you remember? Any stories or specific things that she did?

W: Well, I know that when we'd have school plays, Mother helped us out a lot, helped the teachers out a lot with the school plays, because I guess she'd had a little experience in that field.

From her time on the stage in New York, do you think?

W: Well, could have been. Or she was just interested in it. I really don't know.

Yes. Do you know what she did on the stage? Was she an actress or a singer or dancer?

W: No, I really don't know.

She didn't tell you that part?

W: No. I just have these two pictures. I found them in her trunk. She said yes, that she had been on the stage with her sister, Desda, and that's all she would . . . I don't think I asked Mother many questions—I wish I had—about her family. But I never did.

You didn't do much visiting back to her family?

W: No.

Did you ever go back and visit them?

W: No. No, I never met any of them, except my grandfather, when we went . . . and the aunts and uncles when I was a little girl at my grandmother's funeral. But that was the only time.

OK. And your dad worked on the claims. Is that how they had it arranged? Your dad would go out and work on the claims, and your mom would run the store?

W: Yes, and he worked in the store after he came home and had a bath or washed up. He would come and work in the store. I don't know what time he left work, but whenever he felt that he was tired, I suppose. He sold to Noble Getchell one of his . . . I think the name of it was the Jackson [Mine].

That was one of his claims that he sold to Noble?

W: Yes. I'm not sure just exactly which one it was, whether it was the Link or the Jackson, but one of those. They're very close together.

Both of those turned out to be pretty good claims, too, right?

W: Right. Dad just missed on everything. He did the Miners Gold as well. [laughter]

Really? He had that as a claim also?

W: Yes, that was up the canyon. Up above where Dan Bennett, on the opposite canyon of where the waterworks is. That was named the Miners Gold.

And he sold these claims? Was it his purpose to just develop them and then sell them? Or do you think he really was hoping to strike it rich?

W: Well, I think he wanted to strike it rich. I think that was his main goal.

OK. Is there anything else that we should talk about? What about etiquette? You said your mom taught kids different things when they were in the store—math and grammar. Did she teach good manners, too?

W: I don't know about math. I can remember she taught Gordon and I the times tables, but I don't remember of doing it to other children.

Not working with other kids?

W: No, I don't think so. I don't remember, so I can't tell you. [laughter]

Sure. Do you remember her putting any emphasis on etiquette, on good manners?

W: Well, she did for us, but I don't remember She would probably correct them. She was great at that, I know, but I don't remember of any instance when she corrected other *outside* children.

If you were going to describe your mother to me, how would you describe her? How she looked, and what her personality was.

W: Well, she was a very, very attractive woman, and I have never thought of it. Well, she was a very loving person. She had a very quick temper, but she got over it very fast. We always knew if we were in company, that we shouldn't say that, because Mother would bat her eyes at us very fast, and that meant to behave yourself. [laughter] But she was very loving, and she gave us a lot of love. We knew that she loved us very much. Outside of that, she had a great personality, I'm positive, and quite a sense of humor—a much greater sense of humor than my father did. He was more on the English type, and he had a rather a dry wit. But Mother was kind of quick on the draw.

Did your mother make some good friends while she was there, do you know?

W: Oh yes. I don't think she ever got terribly close to any particular person, but she played bridge, and occasionally they'd

get up a bridge game, and she'd close up the store and go and play bridge. [laughter] We always had like these old country dances, and Mother always went with some other of the ladies, and they'd always sit on the side and watch us, and I always had to go home with Mother.

You always had to go home with your mom?

W: Right. Of course I was only twelve and thirteen years old, mostly. And I'd come home for summer vacations, but other than that, why, I didn't spend much time in Midas after I was thirteen.

Where were the dances held?

W: Well, there was a town hall, and I think someone said it was still in existence. We had our school plays in it, and all the dances were up there.

Did they have them regularly, like every Saturday night?

W: Oh no, it was just occasionally when they decided. I remember Charles Lyons played the saxophone, and I'm not sure who played the piano. And then there was a lady there that played the accordion, but I can't remember much about them. I know they were fun.

Yes, that sounds like fun.

W: We had the Virginia reel and all those old-fashioned dances, besides the modern [dances] of the day. The boys from Squaw Valley Ranch and the ranches nearby would come up, and so there was quite a crowd.

OK, that was good. Is there anything else that you can remember about Midas at the time that you were growing up there? Were

there lots of men like your dad, working on mining claims while you were growing up?

W: Oh, I suppose so, yes. I helped in the store, and I remember waiting on some of them. I even knew how to cut tobacco—the plug of tobacco they would carry, the miners—and canned tobacco and things like that. And, of course, [there were] the ranchers that came in. Outside of that . . . I know that after I came home for vacations, I would get very, very lonesome. Whether . . . I think the mines were mostly shut down by that time.

I see. Now, what year were you born there?

W: I was born April 5, 1912.

And so it would have been 1925, around in there you went to school?

W: I went away to school in 1925.

And then when you came home on vacations around that time, things were closed and you got lonely, huh?

W: Yes. There were a few girls. Most of us, we would take hikes. I can't remember what else we did.

But there weren't many people still living there?

W: No, there were not. It had pretty well died down, the town had.

And when you went off to school, did your parents still own the store and the post office?

W: Yes. I don't know if they did the post office. They gave it up, and Mrs. Lyons, I think, bought it at that time. She was the postmistress. And her daughter lived there,

and I know that I palled around . . . She was older, Agnes [was], than I, but I palled around with her. And Minerva Macy. They were both older. Then there was that Frances Crumley, Frances Smith. Her father was assayer for Noble Getchell.

I see.

W: She's now Frances Crumley. And then there was that niece of Mrs. Young. She was the woman that murdered her husband. I can't remember the girl's name, but she was a lovely girl, and I palled around with her some. Those are most of the girls that I can remember. Oh, Jane Lewis. Mrs. Lewis owned a restaurant. She was an English-woman. And those are the only girls that I can remember that . . . And I don't know what we did . . . we'd take walks, like down the canyon. And I read a lot, which helped me pass the time away. And then I helped Mother some—not as much as I *should* have.

Yes, in the store. And was your brother around then, too? Did he go off to school?

W: Oh yes, he was there, but you know, we didn't go around together very much. We had different . . . he found *his* friends among the boys, and those were the days boys didn't have much use for girls. So just what Gordon did, I'm not positive.

You had different experiences in that respect.

W: Right.

Did your mom teach you things like how to cook and bake and some of the things that she had to learn?

W: No, not very much. I would start things, and I'd leave them, and Mother would finish them. She didn't have the time

to stop and teach me these things. And she was so fast, that I would start something, and then I wouldn't finish it, and Mother didn't like to see it laying around, so she'd go and do it. That's embroidery work or sewing. So I never learned to cook, although Mother, one time when she went I would watch her, and one time she became ill, and I was able to get our meals for us. I remember cooking some trout and some deer steaks, things like that.

Was there a place to catch trout around there?

W: Oh yes, there were a lot of streams. Midas was a very good fishing area and hunting area. There were a lot of outsiders that came in.

So when you ate trout or venison, was that something that your father had hunted, or would some of the outsiders share what they'd gotten?

W: No, I would say Gordon and my father. It was always in the family. Outsiders might have given, you know, occasionally a trout, but I don't remember it.

It was more that your dad and your brother went to bring in the things.

W: Yes, and I used to go fishing with my dad. I was able to catch six fish, and that's the most I ever could catch. [laughter]

That's good! OK. Did your mom have a garden? Do you recall any gardens?

W: Well, it sort of seems like. I'm not sure.

You're not sure about that?

W: No, I'm not. We bought most of the stuff. It sort of seems like Mother did, but I'm not positive.

By the time you left, it was before the Depression started, is that correct?

W: Yes.

And did your parents stay in Midas during the Depression years?

W: Oh yes. Yes, and Dad lost quite a lot of money in that bank in Winnemucca.

Did he? Did it shut down?

W: Yes. Yes, the First National Bank in Winnemucca. I graduated in 1929, and then I went to college here [Reno] just for a year. And then I went down to Pasadena to school down there. I never finished college. I took a business course, and then I came back.

Oh, also, there was a big mining Some people bought a mine up in Midas, and they had the office, I can remember, down in Ehlers's house, and I came and worked in the office. I came up from Pasadena, and I don't remember that Oh, I guess that's the time I met Dempsey. I can't quite connect that—I've thought of it. Oh, I guess that's when they bought Miners Gold—the people that bought Miners Gold. And I worked in the office for a short time.

I see. Did your parents stay in Midas, or did they move away?

W: No, they never moved away until 1937. They had bought the Club Apartments in Reno, that was the old Golden home. I had come down to Reno, and I was going to go back down to California and finish my schooling, and Gordon was going to start the university here in Reno. And

friends of my father's owned this apartment house. At one time he had been superintendent of a mine in Midas, and Dad had known him years before. So they wanted me to come down and stay with them, and they had an apartment for me. Ed Bevis was going to open a mining stock exchange in Reno, and he wanted to sell the apartment house. So I wrote or called my parents and told them, and it was quite reasonable, so they came down and they bought it. And they asked me to manage it, and the Bevises would help me. And then Ed Bevis died, and the folks came down in 19 I had married by that time and had a child. I married in 1935, and Warren was born in 1936. We were going to buy a house, and the folks came down—closed the store and everything—to Reno to live. That's how I remember the dates. They came down in 1937.

So they stayed quite a while after you were graduated and moved away [from Midas].

W: Oh yes. They were there quite a while. They had a lot of money they lost on their books.

Did they?

W: You know, people couldn't pay them, so they

Was it a matter that they would give credit, and then people couldn't pay?

W: Oh yes. Everybody had charge accounts, I think. [laughter] Mother kept the books, and she was a good bookkeeper.

But I imagine when the Depression came, and the mines closed down, there just wasn't any money to pay bills.

W: No. I don't know as there were any mines open at that time or working. I don't remember of it, but there might have been. Of course, I had left Midas, and I hadn't been up to Midas. Once, my husband and I went up, and my sister-in-law, but I hadn't really been up to Midas for years.

You didn't go back regularly?

W: Oh no. No, Dad and Mother would come down to Reno occasionally.

OK. Is there anything else about Midas? I know that you talked to Dana and Dan over lunch previously, so they had quite a bit of information, but is there anything else that you'd thought of that you wanted to include about Midas, or your memories of your mom or dad?

W: No. Dad was on all the boards—on the school board and election board and all, always. Of course, they were fairly prominent for a little town like that. But other than that, I just can't think of anything at the present moment anyway.

OK, well, let's stop there, and if you do, we'll come back to it. Thank you for your time today.

W: Well, you're very welcome.

Note

1. She later stated it was Salt Lake Hardware Company.

GLOSSARY

Unless otherwise noted, all definitions are from *The Glossary of Geology* (Falls Church, Virginia: American Geological Institute, 1980) or from *Nevada Ghost Towns and Mining Camps*, by Stanley Paher (San Diego, California: Howell-North Books, 1970).

adit, *n.* A horizontal passage from the surface into a mine, sometimes called a tunnel.

amalgam, *n.* A naturally occurring alloy of silver with mercury; a general term for alloys of mercury with one or more of the well-known metals, especially an alloy of mercury with gold, containing 40 to 60 percent gold and obtained from the plates in a mill treating gold ore.

arrastra, *n.* Large, bowl-shaped devices in which Hispanic miners ground ore with the aid of a slow-circling mules.

assay, *v.* To analyze the proportions of metals in an ore; to test an ore or mineral for composition, purity, weight, or other properties of commercial interest.

ball mill, *n.* A rotating horizontal cylinder with a diameter almost equal to the length

supported by a frame or shaft in which materials are ground using grinding media such as iron or steel balls.

blasting, *n., v.* An explosion of dynamite; to blow up or move with an explosive.

claim, *n.* In mining law, a portion of public land on which an individual may have mining rights.

concentrates, *n.* The valuable fraction of an ore that is left after worthless material is removed in processing.

crosscut, *n.* A small passageway that may be driven at an angle to the main entry of a mine, to connect it with a parallel entry or an air course. A level driven across the course of a vein or across the general direction of the workings; thus a mine opening that intersects a vein or ore-bearing structure at an angle.

cyanide process, *n.* A process for the extraction of gold from finely crushed ores, concentrates, and tailings by means of cyanide potassium. The gold is dissolved by the

solution and subsequently deposited upon metallic zinc or by other means.

district, *n.* In the states and territories west of the Missouri (prior to 1880), a vaguely bounded and temporary division and organization made by the inhabitants of a mining region.

drift, *n.* A horizontal or nearly horizontal underground opening driven along a vein.

dump, *n.* A pile or heap of waste-rock material or other non-ore refuse near a mine.

fault, *n.* A fracture or a zone of fractures along which there has been displacement of the sides relative to one another parallel to the fracture.

flotation, *n.* The method of mineral separation in which a froth created in water by a variety of reagents floats some finely crushed minerals, whereas other minerals sink.

flux, *n.* A substance that promotes the fusing of minerals or metals or prevents the formation of oxides.

footwall, *n.* The underlying side of a fault, orebody, or mine working; especially the wall rock beneath an inclined vein or fault.

gallows frame, *n.* The frame supporting a pulley over which the hoisting rope passes.

headframe, *n.* The steel or timber frame at the top of a shaft which carries the sheave or pulley for the hoisting rope and serves various other purposes.

high-grade, *adj.* Said of an ore with a relatively high ore-mineral content

lagging, *n.* Heavy planks or timbers used to support the roof of a mine or for the floors

of working places and for the accumulation of rock and earth in a stope.

leaching, *n.* The extraction of soluble metals or salts from an ore by means of slowly percolating solutions; e.g. the separation of gold by treatment with a cyanide solution.

level, *n.* Mines are customarily worked from shafts through horizontal passages or drifts called levels. These are commonly spaced at regular intervals in depth and are either numbered from the surface in regular order or designated by their actual elevation below the top of the shaft.

lifters, *n.* A set of holes drilled for dynamite blasting in a mine which, when exploded, lifts the rock.

mill, *n.* Reducing plant where ore is concentrated and /or metals recovered.

mucking, *n.* Loading broken rock by hand or machine and removing it following a blast.

ore, *n.* The naturally occurring material from which a mineral or minerals of economic value can be extracted at a reasonable profit.

patent, *n.* A document which conveys title to the ground, and no further assessment work needs to be done.

pulp, *n.* A mixture of ground ore and water capable of flowing through suitably graded channels as a fluid.

shaft, *n.* A vertical or inclined excavation through which a mine is worked.

stamp mill, *n.* An apparatus in which rock is crushed by descending pestles or stamps operated by water, steam, or electric power. Also, the building containing the machin-

ery.

stope, *n.* An underground excavation formed by the extraction of ore.

tailings, *n.* Those portions of washed or milled ore that are regarded as too poor to be treated further, as distinguished from the concentrates or material of value.

tram, *v.* To haul or push cars about in a mine.

tunnel, *n.* Strictly speaking, a passage in a mine that is open to the surface at both ends. It is often used loosely as a synonym for adit or drift.

vein, *n.* A zone or belt of mineralized rock lying within boundaries clearly separating it from neighboring rock.

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